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GREGORY THE GREAT

"Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us. The Lord hath wrought great glory by them through His great power from the beginning. Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms, men renowned for their power, giving counsel by their understanding, and declaring prophecies: leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their knowledge of learning meet for the people, wise and eloquent in their instructions: such as found out musical tunes, and recited verses in writing: rich men furnished with ability, living peaceably in their habitations: all these were honoured in their generations, and were the glory of their times."—*Ecclesiasticus* xliv.

"Cum suos sancta per orbem ecclesia Catholica in omni gente doctores semper celebrare non cessat, quos Christo domino magistrante ad se directos in eo gloriando congaudet, eosque scriptis memorialibus promulget in posteros, *ut ponant in Deo spem suam et non obliviscantur operum Dei* sui *et mandata eius exquirant*, merito nos quoque nostri mentionem magistri possumus iuxta vires nostras, adiuvante Domino, facere describentes, quem sanctum Gregorium cum omni etiam orbe praefato possumus appellare."—*S. Gallen Life of Gregory.* Proem.

GREGORY THE GREAT

HIS PLACE IN HISTORY AND THOUGHT

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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PREFACE

THOUGH painfully conscious of the many imperfections of the study of Pope Gregory and his times which I now offer to the public, I cannot but feel that the attempt itself to give some detailed account of the most remarkable man of a remarkable age[1] needs no apology. Gregory the Great is certainly one of the most notable figures in ecclesiastical history. He has exercised in many respects a momentous influence on the doctrine, the organization, and the discipline of the Catholic

[1] Gregorovius (*Rome in the Middle Ages* ii. 70) writes: "The sixth century is one of the most memorable in history. In it mankind experienced the overthrow of a great and ancient civilization, and on this account believed that the end of the world had come. A thick cloud of barbarism, as it were of dust arising from the crash, hung over the Roman Empire devastated throughout its length and breadth by the destroying angel, dealing pestilence and other ills. The world entered upon a turning-point in its development. Upon the ruins of the ancient Empire, amid which the Goths, premature heralds of Germany, had perished, fresh forms of national life now slowly arose; in Italy, through the instrumentality of the Lombards; in Gaul, through that of the Franks; in Spain, by means of the Visigoths; in Britain, by those of the Saxons. The Catholic Church everywhere constituted itself the vital principle of these growing nations. To the Church they turned as to a centre, and, through the conquest of Arianism, the Church by degrees drew them together in a union which was destined, sooner or later, to give political form to a new Western Empire. These events took place at a time when the East was stirred by a like impulse of development; when Mohammed had appeared to found a new religion, which, uniting nations on the Eastern ruins of the Roman dominion, forced the Byzantine Empire first to return to Italy, and then for centuries to be the bulwark of Hellenic culture in the West. Gregory and Mohammed were the two priests of the West and East. Each founded a hierarchy on the ruins of antiquity, and through the concussion of the two systems the future fate of Europe and Asia was decided. Rome and Mecca, here the Basilica of St. Peter, there the Caaba, became the symbolic temples of the Covenants of the European and the Asiatic world, while the marvel of the Byzantine Empire, the Church built by Justinian to St. Sophia, remained the centre of existing Hellenism."

Church. To him we must look for an explanation of the religious situation of the Middle Ages: indeed, if no account were taken of his work, the evolution of the form of mediaeval Christianity would be almost inexplicable. And further, in so far as the modern Catholic system is a legitimate development of mediaeval Catholicism, of this too Gregory may not unreasonably be termed the Father. In recent times an attempt has been made to distinguish the Christianity of the first six centuries from that of the Schoolmen and the later divines. But to any one who will take the trouble to examine the writings of the last great Doctor of the sixth century, the futility of this arbitrary distinction will soon become apparent. Almost all the leading principles of the later Catholicism are found, at any rate in germ, in Gregory the Great.

Nor, again, can those who are interested only in purely secular history afford to overlook the work of one of the greatest of the early Popes, whose influence was felt alike by the Byzantine Emperors, by the Lombard princes, by the kings in Britain, Gaul, and Spain. Gregory was by far the most important personage of his time. He stood in the very centre of his world, and overshadowed it. He took an interest and claimed a share in all its chief transactions; he was in relation, more or less intimate, with all its leading characters. If the history of the latter part of the sixth century is to be studied intelligently, it must be studied in close connexion with the life and labours of that illustrious Pontiff, who for many years was the foremost personage in Europe, and did more, perhaps, than any other single man to shape the course of European development.

Finally, to Gregory the students of English history are more especially bound to devote their attention, since it is he who was the means of introducing Christianity among the English, and of renewing the broken communications between Britain and the Roman world. How far-reaching have been the effects of his action it is unnecessary to point out. I will only

remark that, in respect of the history of the doctrine of the English Church, Gregory's theology is of particular interest. For the system of dogma which was introduced into our island by Augustine was the system elaborated by Augustine's revered master.

In view of these considerations, it is certainly astonishing that a satisfactory English biography of the saint has not long ago appeared. That none has been given us is perhaps due to the fact that recent English theologians and ecclesiastical historians have concerned themselves mainly with the period of the Great Councils and with the period of the Reformation, and have passed over the intervening centuries from A.D. 500 onwards as less interesting and less worthy of their notice. But whatever the explanation may be, it is certain that hitherto the life and times of Gregory have not adequately been dealt with in the English language. Foreign writers, particularly in Germany, have shown a more just appreciation of the historical significance of the great Pope, and a few valuable monographs on the subject have been published, the most important of which I shall enumerate below. But some of these works are out of print, and otherwise inaccessible, and not one of them, so far as I know, has been translated for the benefit of English readers.

Under the circumstances, therefore, I conceive that there is room for a detailed study of the life and times of Gregory. The first two books of my biography deal with the history of the saint, and here I have treated my material in the fullest way, endeavouring to pass over nothing that is really pertinent, and supporting my assertions with ample references to the original authorities. I have further aimed at giving some account of the political, social, and religious characteristics of the age, in the hope that my work may prove of some slight service to those who are interested in historical research. The third book of the biography is concerned exclusively with Gregory's theology, and I think that I may claim that it is

the first attempt that has been made in English to set forth systematically the dogmatic utterances of the last of the Latin Doctors. The length of my two volumes will, I fear, prejudice some of my critics; but I would plead in excuse that the period is one with which most people are unfamiliar, and I judged it best to draw as complete a picture of it as I could, without presuming too much on the knowledge of my readers, or irritating them by continual references to standard works, to which they may not have easy access.

It will be convenient here to summarize in chronological order the principal authorities for the life of the Pope.

(1) First, of course, come the writings of Gregory himself. Of these the following are now universally admitted to be genuine: *Epistolarum Libri XIV*, *Moralium Libri XXXV*, *Regulae Pastoralis Liber*, *Dialogorum Libri IV*, *Homiliarum in Ezechielem Prophetam Libri II*, *Homiliarum in Evangelia Libri II.* These are all printed in Migne's *Patrologia Latina.* The *Epistolae*, however, have been published separately by Paul Ewald and L. M. Hartmann, in the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (Berlin, 1887–1899). This splendid edition has superseded all others, and throughout the following pages I have used it exclusively in my references to the *Letters.* The question of the chronological reconstruction of the *Register* I do not propose to enter into, since all that needs to be said on that question has been said already by Ewald, in his celebrated article in the *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, iii. pp. 433–625. Those who lack the patience to master this long and, it must be confessed, difficult exposition, will find a useful summary of the chief results of Ewald's investigations in Hodgkin's *Italy and her Invaders* vol. v. pp. 333–343. In respect of translations, the *Pastoral Care* and a selection of the *Letters* have been rendered into English by the late Dr. Barmby, in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vols. xii, xiii; the *Pastoral* has again been translated by the Rev. H. R. Bramley, sometime Canon of Lincoln

(Parker, 1874); a version of the *Morals* will be found in the *Library of Fathers*. Of the *Dialogues*, a quaint translation was issued in the early part of the seventeenth century, but, though republished subsequently, it is now out of print. For further information about these writings of Gregory, I refer the reader to my book, and also to G. J. T. Lau *Gregor I der Grosse* pt. ii. c. 1, "Die Schriften Gregors."

In addition to the above-mentioned works, there are printed under Gregory's name, in Migne's *Patrologia Latina* vol. lxxix., some other writings of very doubtful authenticity. The names of them are *Super Cantica Canticorum Expositio, In Librum Primum Regum Variarum Expositionum Libri VI, In Septem Psalmos Poenitentiales Expositio*, and *Concordia Quorundam Testimoniorum S. Scripturae*. A discussion of the authorship of these writings will be found in the introductions prefixed to them in Migne's edition, and also in Lau. In my own opinion they cannot be ascribed to Gregory; though I must admit that a case can be made out in favour of the Gregorian authorship of the *Commentary on the Song of Solomon*, since a work by Gregory, bearing this title, is referred to by Columban (*Epp.* i.) and Ildefonsus (*De Vir. Illustr.* c. 1), and, if the Benedictine editors may be trusted, it is cited in a genuine passage of Paterius (Migne *P. L.* lxxix. p. 470; but cf. Lau *Gregor de Grosse* p. 322). On the other hand, the dissimilarity of style to that of the genuine Gregory, the absence of any mention of this work in Paul the Deacon, John the Deacon, and Isidore, and the fact that Bede, in his own exposition of Solomon's Song, quotes passages referring to it from Gregory's genuine works, but makes no allusion to a special commentary composed by him,—these considerations make strongly against the view that Gregory was the author. It is possible, however, that the commentary was the work of Gregory's pupil, the abbat Claudius, based on notes of some lectures given by his master in St. Andrew's Monastery (Greg. *Epp.* xii. 6). The other writings I believe to be of later date. The *Commentary*

on the First of Kings was probably written by some unknown monk about the tenth century[1]; the *Exposition on the Penitential Psalms* belongs, it seems likely, to the age of Gregory the Seventh[2]; the *Concordia* is of uncertain date, and was obviously written by one who was acquainted with Gregory's writings, but there is not a shred of evidence to prove that Gregory himself was the author.

(2) The second authority for Gregory's life is his contemporary, Gregory of Tours (died 17th November 594 or 595), who, in the tenth book of his *Historia Francorum*, supplies us with a little information about his Roman namesake. The best edition of the *Historia* is that of Arndt and Krusch, in the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. I may add

[1] The principal arguments against the Gregorian authorship are: (1) The Commentary was not known to Isidore, Bede, Ildefonsus, Paul the Deacon, or John the Deacon, nor is it cited by Gregory's excerptors, Paterius, Taio, or Alulf, nor is it referred to by later commentators on Kings. The monk Ratherius (c. 928), in his book *De Contemptu Canonum*, certainly quotes some words which are found in this commentary (ii. 2. 17), but the reference is probably rather to Greg. *Reg. Past.* i. 2. (2) The diction, style, and doctrine, while exhibiting a general resemblance to those of the genuine Gregory, yet differ noticeably in several important particulars (Migne, lxxix. pp. 10–14; Lau *Gregor I der Grosse* pp. 320, 321). (3) The author cites from the Vulgate, which Gregory did not use. It is certainly not impossible that this book, like the *Commentary on the Song of Solomon*, was compiled by Claudius from notes of Gregory's lectures on Kings (Greg. *Epp.* xii. 6), but it seems to me more probable that it was the composition of some later imitator of the Pope who aimed at, and to some extent succeeded in, reproducing the characteristics of the Gregorian style and teaching.

[2] Against ascribing this work to Gregory the Great it may be argued: (1) Gregory himself nowhere speaks of having lectured or written on the Psalms, though he gives a list of other parts of Scripture of which he gave expositions. (2) Neither the biographers nor Isidore, Bede, or Ildefonsus refer to it. (3) The passage in Paterius *In Psalmos* c. 64 should be referred to Greg. *Hom. in Ezech.* i. 4, § 5 rather than to *Exp. in Sept. Psalm. Poenit.* ii. 1; while the passage *In Psalmos* c. 68 should be referred to *Mor.* xvii. 48–50. (4) The style, in my opinion at least, is not Gregorian. (5) The allusions to a schismatic, persecuting Emperor (*Exp. in Sept. Psalm. Poenit.* v. 13, 36; *ibid.* vii. Proem.) fit neither Maurice nor Phocas, though they would be appropriate as applied to Henry IV by a friend of Gregory VII. Hence I conclude that the book was written, if not by Gregory VII himself (Migne, lxxix. p. 550), yet by some friend of his, possibly Robert abbat of St. Victor, with the Pope's sanction and in his name. At any rate, there is no reason at all for attributing its composition to Gregory the Great.

that all the works of the historian of Tours (published in Migne *P. L.* lxxi.) have been largely drawn upon by me, to illustrate the life and manners of the period.

(3) The third authority is the author of the notice on Gregory in the *Liber Pontificalis.* This short account, though telling us little, is valuable as being the production of at least a quasi-contemporary (L. Duchesne *Le Liber Pontificalis: Texte, Introduction et Commentaire*). It was used by the subsequent biographers.

(4) Next, we have two scanty notices by Isidore of Seville (*De Vir. Illustr.* 40) and Ildefonsus of Toledo (*De Vir. Illustr.* 1), belonging respectively to the first and the second half of the seventh century, and both dealing mainly with Gregory's writings.

(5) Our fifth authority is a *Life of Gregory,* written by an anonymous monk of Whitby, probably about the year 713, and discovered by Ewald in an ancient MS. collection of saints' lives belonging to the Monastery of St. Gall (see his article, *Die älteste Biographie Gregors I,* in *Historische Aufsätze dem Andenken an G. Waitz gewidmet,* Hannover: Hahn, 1886). This document has since been published in full by Dr. F. A. Gasquet (*A Life of Pope St. Gregory the Great,* 1904), who gives an interesting account of it in his introduction. As an historical work, the value of the biography is not very great. "Of the saint's life, beyond the barest outline, the writer knows nothing; he expressly complains of the scantiness of his materials, and of their unauthentic character; for the most part he can rely only on oral tradition, and that of persons not informed at first hand." Nevertheless, the treatise has a real importance, "as being a record of essentially English tradition in regard to the saint," and as being "the source and first authority for the most notable miraculous occurrences reported of St. Gregory" (Gasquet *A Life of Pope St. Gregory the Great,* Introd.).

(6) Not many years after the completion of the Whitby

biography, the Venerable Bede, in his *Ecclesiastical History* (finished in 731), published some letters of Gregory, together with a statement of certain facts connected with his life. This author procured his materials from various sources, particularly from the English Anonymous and from Nothelm, a priest of London, who placed at his disposal copies of some of Gregory's letters which he had found in the archives of the Roman Church. Bede's account, of course, has reference principally to Gregory's connexion with the English mission. The best edition of the *Historica Ecclesiastica* is Mr. Plummer's.

(7) Towards the end of the eighth century, probably between the years 770 and 780, Paul the Deacon, son of Warnefrid, compiled (chiefly from Gregory's own writings and the English sources) the short *Vita Gregorii Magni*, printed in Migne *P. L.* lxxv. The biography relates succinctly the leading events of Gregory's career, and supplies a catalogue of his literary works. It is a careful composition, of which the accuracy may generally be relied on. It is not, however, free from foreign accretions, and the section dealing with Gregory's miracles (cc. 23–28) is rejected by Grisar and Bethmann as almost certainly an interpolation.

Highly important also for the history of Gregory's pontificate, is Paul's more celebrated work, the *Historia Langobardorum*. The best edition is that of Waitz, in the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*.

(8) Lastly, about a century later, John the Deacon, at the request of Pope John the Eighth (872–882), produced the *Vita Gregorii*, printed in Migne *P. L.* lxxv. The biographer tells us in his preface that a complaint was made in Rome that, although short lives of Gregory had been written by the Saxon Bede and the Lombard Paul, yet in the Roman Church no history of the saint had been produced; and that in consequence, Pope John the Eighth gave him a commission to sea ch the archives of the Apostolic See, and with the materials thence derived to write a life, fuller and more detailed than

any that had yet been published. The result of John's labours is a somewhat tedious work, divided into four books, the headings of which were obviously suggested by those of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*. The first book professes to tell us in what way and by what virtues Gregory attained to the pontificate; the second, how he lived when Pope; the third, how his teaching corresponded with his life; the fourth, how, while teaching rightly, he daily recognized his own weakness. The matter of the last three books, however, does not correspond very closely with the titles. The biography consists largely of extracts from Gregory's letters, but it contains a certain amount of interesting information which is not found elsewhere. Yet John is an inaccurate historian, apt to draw unwarrantable inferences, and given to repeating unauthenticated traditions as though they were verified history. Hence, when his testimony conflicts with that of other authorities, it may, unless strong reasons appear to the contrary, with safety be rejected.

Such are the original authorities which bear directly on the life of Gregory. But besides these I have frequently referred to many others which, more or less indirectly, throw light upon my subject. The works of such authors as Cassiodorus, Evagrius, Procopius, Gregory of Tours, Paul the Deacon, Theophylact, Isidore, and Theophanes, to say nothing of the lesser contemporary chroniclers and biographers and the later Byzantine historians, can of course be neglected by no serious student of this period. Of these writers, however, I need not here supply a complete list; whenever I have had occasion to quote them I have supplied the reference in my notes.

In the first volume of the Benedictine edition of Gregory's works there is printed, in addition to the biographies of Paul and John, the long and laborious *Vita Gregorii* by Dom. Denis de Ste. Marthe, superior-general of the Maurist congregation of Benedictines. This compilation is based upon the *Letters* and the earlier *Lives*, and was for long regarded almost as a classical

authority; even now, though ill-arranged and somewhat wearisome, it is not unworthy of perusal. The notes on Gregory by Baronius and the Bollandists also deserve attention.

I must add a few words respecting the more recent literature on Gregory.

(1) In English there are few books of any importance. The best with which I am acquainted are: J. Barmby *Gregory the Great* in *The Fathers for English Readers*, 1892 (short but good): T. Hodgkin *Italy and her Invaders* vol. v. cc. 7–10 (very brilliant work); H. K. Mann *The Lives of the Popes* vol. i. pp. 1–250 (careful and well arranged); F. Gregorovius *Rome in the Middle Ages* (English translation) vol. ii. pp. 16–103. Besides these may be mentioned J. Barmby *Prolegomena* to the translation of the select *Letters of Gregory* in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. xii; R. W. Church *The Letters of Pope Gregory I* in *Miscellaneous Essays;* T. B. Snow *St. Gregory the Great, his Work and his Spirit;* A. J. Saxton *St. Gregory the Great* (London Catholic Truth Society); F. W. Kellett *Pope Gregory the Great and his Relations with Gaul* (Cambridge Historical Essays); T. Meyrick *Lives of the Early Popes* second series, c. 7; Montalembert *Monks of the West* bk. v. (English translation); H. H. Milman *History of Latin Christianity* bk. iii. c. 7; J. Milner *Ecclesiastical History* cent. vi. cc. 5–8; J. C. Robertson *History of the Christian Church* vol. ii. c. 1; Alban Butler *Lives of the Saints* 12 March; Baring Gould *Lives of the Saints* 12 March; and the very unsatisfactory article in Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Biography*.

(2) Of the foreign publications a fairly complete list will be found in the bibliographies of Gregory in Chevalier *Répertoire des Sources historiques du Moyen Age*, and A. Potthast *Bibliotheca historica Medii Aevi*. The following are among the most valuable: G. J. T. Lau *Gregor I der Grosse nach seinem Leben und seiner Lehre geschildert* (1845); C. Wolfsgruber, *Gregor der Grosse* (1897); W. Wisbaum *Die wichtigsten Richtungen und Ziele der Thätigkeit des Papstes Gregors des Grossen* (1884); L.

Pingaud *La Politique de Saint Grégoire le Grand* (1872); T. Wollschack, *Die Verhältnisse Italiens, insbesondere des Langobardenreichs, nach dem Briefwechsel Gregors I* (1888); W. Hohaus *Die Bedeutung Gregors des Grossen als liturgischer Schriftsteller* (1889); F. Lampe *Qui fuerint Gregorii Magni Papae temporibus in imperii Byzantini parte occidentali exarchi et qualia eorum iura atque officia* (1892); Th. Bonsmann *Gregor I der Grosse, ein Lebensbild* (1890); G. F. Wiggers *De Gregorio Magno eiusque placitis anthropologicis* (1838); H. J. Leblanc *Utrum b. Gregorius Magnus litteras humaniores et ingenuas artes odio persecutus sit* (1852); and Ceillier *Histoire gén. des auteurs ecclésiastiques* xi. c. 49, pp. 429–587. In addition to these, the researches of Diehl, Weise, Dahn, Duchesne, and others, particularly the minute and laborious investigations of Von Hartmann Grisar, have cleared up much that was obscure and difficult in my subject. In the following pages, however, while supplying full references to the original authorities and all sources of first-hand information, I have, save in a very few cases, deliberately refrained, through considerations of space, from referring to modern authors, to many of whom, nevertheless, I here confess myself deeply indebted.

In respect of maps, I have used Spruner's *Historisch-Geographischer Hand-atlas*, and Poole's *Historical Atlas* (particularly map 63, *Italy in the Lombard Period*). The maps also in Hodgkin's *Italy and her Invaders* I have found most helpful.

Since my book is intended, not merely as a biography of Gregory, but also in some degree as a work of reference on the Gregorian age, I have arranged that my General Index should be as full and clear as possible. To this I have added a special Index of the Life, Works, and Doctrine of the Pope Gregory; and also a table of the leading dates. These Indices, in great part, have been compiled by Mrs. Jackson, of Ealing, to whom I am under obligation for the care with which she has performed her task.

I owe acknowledgments to the Rector and Fellows of Lincoln College, Oxford, for their courtesy in placing at my disposal a quantity of manuscript notes on the life of Gregory, compiled by a late Fellow, the Rev. T. H. Halcomb, and preserved in the Library of the College. Mr. Halcomb had spent much time and labour in collecting materials for a monograph on Gregory, but, owing to his untimely death, his work was left in a state of such disorder that I have been able to make but little use of it. Still, I have received from these manuscripts a certain amount of help, particularly for my earlier chapters, and a few of Mr. Halcomb's translations I have adopted in my book.

Finally, my sincere thanks are due to the Rev. F. E. Brightman, Canon of Lincoln and Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, for his great kindness in reading through all my proofs. By his advice and criticism he has done me a service the value of which this grateful acknowledgment can but ill express.

F. HOMES DUDDEN.

LINCOLN COLLEGE,
OXFORD,
August 29, 1905.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOL. I

BOOK I

GREGORY'S LIFE BEFORE HIS PONTIFICATE

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Gregory's Family and Home	3
II.	The World of Gregory's Childhood	16
III.	Gregory's Education	69
IV.	The Coming of the Lombards	80
V.	Gregory as Prefect and Monk	99
VI.	Gregory at Constantinople	123
VII.	The Lombards, 574–590	158
VIII.	Gregory the Abbat	187

BOOK II

GREGORY'S PONTIFICATE

I.	Gregory's View of the Episcopate	225
II.	Life and Work in Rome	242
III.	The Patrimony of St. Peter. The *Dialogues*	295
IV.	Gregory Patriarch of the West. His Relations with the Churches of the Suburbicarian Provinces and the Islands	357
V.	Gregory Patriarch of the West. His Relations with other Western Churches	402

BOOK I

GREGORY'S LIFE BEFORE HIS PONTIFICATE

CHAPTER I

GREGORY'S FAMILY AND HOME

GREGORY was born in Rome about the year 540. The precise date cannot, indeed, be determined. It appears that he was alive in the year 546,[1] and there are good reasons why we should not carry back his advent into the world earlier than the year 540.[2] But within these limits, 540–545, we are unable, through lack of information, to fix a date with certainty. A vague sentence in the *Dialogues* might possibly imply that his birth was later than 542.[3] On the whole, however, the date which seems best to harmonize with the known facts and chronology of Gregory's life is the generally accepted one, *i.e.*

[1] In *Dial.* iii. 11, referring to the attempted murder of Cerbonius, bishop of Populonia, by Totila at Merulis, a place eight miles from Rome, Gregory asserts that the event occurred "in his own days." The affair of Cerbonius may possibly be attributed to the year 549, but most probably it belongs to 546, when Totila remained a year in the neighbourhood of Rome. Hence Gregory's birth cannot have been later than 545.

[2] It is improbable that Gregory was born earlier than 540. He was not an old man when he died in 604. In his later correspondence he complains frequently of disease, never of old age. His nurse, Dominica (the name is got by an obvious emendation), was alive in 594 (*Epp.* iv. 44). And in 598, writing to Januarius of Cagliari (whose "senectus et simplicitas" he elsewhere refers to, *Epp.* xiv. 2), he excuses himself for "rebuking an elder," quoting St. Paul, 1 Tim. v. 1 (*Epp.* ix. 1). At this time, therefore, Gregory can scarcely have reached, or at any rate have exceeded, the age of sixty years. The date 540, which would make Gregory fifty-eight at the time of writing to Januarius, sixty-four at the time of his death, and which supposes his nurse to have lived till seventy-five or eighty years of age, appears to fit the facts.

[3] *Dial.* iii. 4, where, after relating a story of Datius, bishop of Milan, which belongs to 542 or the early part of 543, Gregory continues: "Sed oportet iam ut priora taceamus, ad ea quae diebus nostris sunt gesta veniendum est." But this does not necessarily imply that Gregory was not born before the middle of 543.

540—the thirteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Justinian, and the third of the pontificate of Vigilius.

All our authorities agree that Gregory was sprung from an ancient senatorial family, renowned alike for its nobility and its piety[1]; and a conjecture has identified this family with the celebrated "gens Anicia," a house which traced back its origin to the palmy days of the Republic, and which rose to influence and enormous wealth under the Empire, reaching the zenith of its prosperity towards the close of the fourth century. This great family was panegyrized by Claudian. Of its sons, Jerome remarks that there was hardly one who did not obtain consular honours; and Augustine adds that it gave virgins to the Church in even greater number than consuls to the State. From this family Rome received her first Christian senator. One of its most famous members was the erudite, unfortunate Boethius, "the last of the Romans whom Cato or Tully would have acknowledged for their countryman." Another, if tradition may be believed, was the great St. Benedict; though Gregory, in his Life of the monastic founder, simply states that he was "of honourable parentage" (*liberiori genere exortus*).[2] It is, of course, tempting to a biographer to claim for Gregory a connection with so distinguished a house. Unfortunately, however, of such connection there is no satisfactory proof. It is neither asserted by Gregory himself, nor is there a hint of it in Gregory of Tours, Bede, or the early "Lives." Yet if the theory referred to be true, this consentient silence is surely inexplicable. We shall therefore, perhaps, be wiser if we pass over the conjecture, and refrain from associating our saint with any particular line of ancestry.

However this may be, we know at least that Gregory was of aristocratic origin. The name of one of his ancestors is recorded. This was Pope Felix the Fourth,[3] the nominee of the Gothic

[1] Gregorius Turonensis *Hist. Franc.* x. 1; Baeda *Hist. Eccl.* ii. 1; Paulus Diaconus *Vita* 1; Johannes Diaconus *Vita* i. 1. The *S. Gallen Life* has: "Nobilis secundum legem, sed nobilior corde coram Deo in religione."

[2] *Dial.* ii. Praef.

[3] Greg. *Dial.* iv. 16; *Hom. in Ev.* 38; Baeda *Hist. Eccl.* ii. 1; Paul. Diac. *Vita* 1. All these omit to state which Felix was Gregory's "atavus"—the third or the fourth Pope of that name. Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 1 first identifies him with Felix the Fourth, the same who founded the church of SS. Cosmas and Damian. Baronius impugns John's statement, and contends that the Pope referred to is Felix the Third (483–492). But his arguments scarcely

king, Theodoric—a shrewd, calculating man, who strengthened the Papacy not a little by obtaining from the Gothic court a decree conferring on the Roman Bishop jurisdiction in all disputes between the clergy and the laity. Towards the end of his life he caused an ecclesiastical scandal by a monstrous attempt to appoint his own successor. Beyond this his name is remembered only in connexion with the foundation of the remarkable church, in the neighbourhood of the Forum, in honour of the twin Arabian physicians and martyrs, SS. Cosmas and Damian.[1]

This church is noteworthy for several reasons. Constructed out of three ancient buildings—the temple of Romulus son of Maxentius, the Templum Sacrae Urbis, and another—and situated on the Via Sacra, close to the Forum, it was the first Christian edifice that was planted in the very heart of pagan Rome. It was, moreover, the first church in Rome erected to local martyrs who were unconnected with Italy and the Eternal City. Why the Eastern physicians were singled out for the special honour is not apparent.[2] Possibly Pope Felix wished to pay a kind of religious compliment to the Eastern Emperor, who held the saints in veneration; possibly he hoped to secure the aid of the martyred doctors to avert or allay some plague which threatened from the East. But in either case the dedication is noteworthy as a distinct departure from the older Roman usage, and may be considered perhaps as an expression of the growing feeling of the universality of the Roman Church. Once more, SS. Cosma e Damiano appears to be the first example in Rome of a church named after the representatives of a distinct profession, and thus marks a step towards the introduction of a principle, according to which, in after-times, every trade and profession in Christendom had its peculiar patron saints, and its appropriate religious services. Lastly, the church was, and still is, interesting for its magnificent ancient mosaics, perhaps the last specimens of original and

justify us in discarding the evidence of John, who was a deacon of the Roman Church, and had every opportunity of verifying his assertion. (See the discussion of the question in the *Benedictine Life* i. 1, § 3.)

[1] *Liber Pontificalis Vita Felicis IV.*

[2] It may be noted that Gregory of Tours deposited relics of SS. Cosmas and Damian in the "cellula" of St. Martin, close to his cathedral church (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* x. 31, § 19).

independent Roman art. These mosaics may yet be seen. Those on the arch represent the Lamb of the Apocalypse with the Book of the Seven Seals; and, at the sides, the seven candlesticks, seraphs, and Evangelists with their proper symbols. Below, the four and twenty elders, offering their crowns, were formerly visible; but of these two defaced forms alone remain. In the tribune Christ is exhibited—a noble and colossal figure standing upon clouds of glory, with the right hand uplifted to bless; and to Him St. Peter and St. Paul are presenting Cosmas and Damian in their jewelled crowns of triumphant martyrdom. On the right is St. Theodore; on the left (a modern figure of) Pope Felix himself, offering the model of his church. Beneath flows the river Jordan; and, in the lowest division of all, the twelve Apostles, symbolized as lambs, emerge from Jerusalem and Bethlehem to adore the Lamb of God. On these mosaics, then in their first lustre, Gregory must have often gazed, when he visited the church of Felix to hear a mass, and to pray, perhaps, for the repose of the soul of his pious ancestor.

Gregory's father bore the Imperial name of Gordianus. He is styled "Regionarius," but what his office was is far from clear. Baronius held that Gordianus was one of the seven Cardinal-Deacons, called Regionarii from their presidency over the seven ecclesiastical Regions of Rome. There is, however, no indication in the "Lives" that Gordianus was in sacred orders.[1] It seems more probable, on the contrary, that he was a secular official,[2] charged with the administration of the secular business of one of the ecclesiastical Regions,[3] where he may have

[1] This statement has been contradicted on the ground that, in the picture described by John the Deacon (*Vita* iv. 83), Gordianus is wearing clerical dress. But the planeta and dalmatica, afterwards purely ecclesiastical vestments, were not at this time confined to the use of the clergy. Silvia herself is represented as wearing a planeta; and the dalmatica was still worn by laymen, if not in ordinary life, at least as a dress of ceremony for State occasions. The Regionarius was painted in his court suit.

[2] The title Regionarius was conferred, not only on deacons, but also on sub-deacons, notaries, and, later, on defensors (Greg. *Epp.* viii. 16). Du Cange says, "Regionarii sunt a pontificibus constituti in schola notariorum et subdiaconorum quos licebat per absentiam pontificis in conventu sedere clericorum, et caeteros habere honores."

[3] The fact that Gordianus was depicted holding the hand of St. Peter (Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 83) may perhaps imply that his duties lay in the district in which St. Peter's Basilica was situated.

relieved the Regionary Deacon in matters of mere business and routine. He was, perhaps, the Deacon's official representative, his legal adviser, and the president of his bureau of charity. Such a post was undoubtedly one of great responsibility, and would be entrusted only to men of tried probity and capacity. That it was also one of dignity may be inferred from the fact that a rich and aristocratic senator did not disdain to undertake its duties. But of Gordianus and his work we know practically nothing. We gather from the "Lives" that he was wealthy, the owner of large estates in Sicily, and of a stately mansion on the Caelian Hill in Rome. He was not, however, a personage of sufficient eminence to attract the attention of history.

Of Gregory's mother, Silvia, we have again but scanty information. Like her husband, she appears to have been of good family, and in later life she became famous for ascetic piety. After the death of Gordianus she embraced a life of seclusion, and went into retreat at a place called Cella Nova, close by the great door of the Basilica of St. Paul.[1] Here, in after-ages, stood an oratory dedicated to the blessed Silvia; and the patrician lady herself is still commemorated as a saint on the third of November.

Through a fortunate circumstance we are able to form a tolerable notion of the outward appearance of the Regionary and his wife, for Gregory had the pair painted in the atrium of St. Andrew's Monastery, and three hundred years later the portraits were inspected by John the Deacon, whose interesting description of them is still extant.[2] In the first painting the Apostle Peter was represented sitting, with his right hand clasping the hand of Gordianus, who was standing near. The Regionary was clad in a chestnut-coloured planeta or chasuble, over a dalmatic, and wore shoes. He was a tall man, with a long face, light eyes, a short beard, bushy hair, and a grave expression of countenance. The second picture showed Silvia seated, robed in white—a lady of full height, with a round, fair face, wrinkled with age, yet still bearing traces of great beauty. Her eyes were large and blue, with delicate eyebrows, her lips were well-formed, her expression cheerful. With two fingers of her right hand she was in the

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 9. See also *Acta Sanctorum*, 3. Nov.

[2] Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 83. See the remarks of Angelo Rocco on these pictures, ap. Migne *P. L.* lxxv. p. 463, *sqq.*

act of making the sign of the cross. In her left was a Psalter, on the open page of which was inscribed the verse, "*Let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee; and let Thy judgments help me.*"

John's description leaves us with a pleasant impression of Gregory's parents, and the word-sketch of the aged mother has a special charm. But the whole account is valuable inasmuch as it helps us to understand some of the characteristics of Gregory's mind and character. For it cannot be doubted that Gregory inherited certain traits from each of the parents whose portraits he had painted in St. Andrew's. Some physical resemblances to each are noticed by John.[1] And it is not to be questioned that many also of Gregory's moral and intellectual peculiarities may be accounted for by means of the principle of heredity. From his mother he doubtless derived his almost feminine tenderness and power of sympathy, his innate bent towards asceticism, his religious mysticism, his self-sacrificing, self-effacing disposition. From his father, no less certainly, he inherited his administrative capacity, his legal acumen, his unswerving love of justice, and that inexorable severity towards hardened offenders which caused him to be feared, in some degree, even by those who loved him best. Thus the nature of the parents is reproduced in the offspring, and in the transactions of Gregory's life we are again and again reminded, now of the grave-faced man of business, the administrator of the Region, now of the lovable, ascetic woman who crosses herself as she ponders over her Psalter.

Gordianus and Silvia had two sons; one they called Gregory —"the Watchful"—"non sine magno quodam praesagio," as notes the early biographer,[2] while of the other we have no record. That he existed is proved by two passages in Pope Gregory's correspondence.[3] But we know nothing about him, not even his name.

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 84.

[2] Paul. Diac. *Vita* 1. He adds: "Re etenim vera vigilavit sibi, dum divinis inhaerendo praeceptis, laudabiliter vixit. Vigilavit et fidelibus populis dum doctrinae affluentis ingenio eis quo tramite caelestia scanderent patefecit." Cf. Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 2. Baeda (*Opp.* x. 268) speaks of him as "vigilantissimus, iuxta suum nomen, nostrae gentis apostolus." Gregory himself possibly plays on his own name in *Epp.* iii. 52. He was fond of inculcating the duty of watchfulness,—see *e.g. Moral.* xix. 33; xx. 8; xxxi. 85, 86, etc.

[3] *Epp.* i. 42; ix. 200. The Benedictine editors give other references, wrongly.

The remaining members of Gregory's family may be dismissed with a brief notice. Gordianus had three sisters, Tarsilla, Aemiliana, and Gordiana, whose history is related by Gregory himself in the thirty-eighth of his *Homilies on the Gospels*.[1] These ladies, it appears, at one and the same time, fired with enthusiasm for the monastic life, dedicated themselves to virginity. Following a custom not unusual in this period, they did not retire into a nunnery, but lived together in their own house, subjecting themselves to all the severities of the monastic rule. Soon the sanctity of Tarsilla and Aemiliana became renowned, but Gordiana's love of solitary holiness rapidly grew cool. Pious conversation bored her, and she began to cultivate the society of girls who were still in the world. Daily therefore the frivolous maiden was visited with the rebukes of her elder sisters. While these interviews lasted she would dutifully assume a look of seriousness, and listen with attention to the strictures on her conduct. But the moment they were ended all her gravity was cast aside, and the incorrigible Gordiana would return light-heartedly to her carnal occupations. One night Tarsilla—the saintliest of the sisters—beheld in a vision her ancestor, Pope Felix, who showed her "a mansion of perpetual brightness," and said, "Come, for I receive thee into this mansion of light." Soon afterwards she fell ill of a fever, which eventually proved fatal. When her last hour drew near, and the crowd of relatives and friends "that usually assemble for the death of well-born persons" stood about her bed, she saw a second vision of the Lord Himself, and cried out to the bystanders, "Back, back! Jesus comes!" And while they stood looking in bewilderment, her soul left the body amid an odour of such wonderful

The passage in ix. 44, "sed si tantum est, gloriosum fratrem nostrum . . . subscribere faciemus," has induced some to endow Gregory's brother with the name Gloriosus. But the word is an adjective, and the reference is probably to that Palatinus who, in xi. 4, is called "gloriosus frater." No actual relationship is implied in either case. In xiv. 2, where reference is made to the monastery, "quod in domo Pomponianae religiosae feminae a fratre nostro constructum est," the words "a fratre nostre" are a gloss. The statement that Gregory's brother was Urban Prefect at the time of Gregory's election to the Papacy is based on a misunderstanding of the name Germanus in Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* x. i.

[1] The story of Tarsilla's death is repeated, *Dial.* iv. 16.

fragrance "that it was clear to all that the Author of Sweetness had been there." Had these occurrences been insufficient to attest the saintliness of this noble lady, a discovery that was made after her death would, at least in the opinion of her contemporaries, have placed the matter beyond the region of doubt. For, when the corpse was being prepared for burial, it was found that, through constant prayer, the skin of the knees had become as hard as a camel's. The saint is now commemorated on Christmas Eve.

The death of Tarsilla occurred shortly before Christmas. Some days afterwards, Aemiliana, in her turn, was vouchsafed a vision. She thought that her dead sister came to her and said, "Come: I have kept the Lord's birthday without thee, but I will keep with thee the day of the holy Epiphany." Aemiliana replied, "But if I come alone, to whom am I to leave our sister?" But the other answered, with a look of sadness, "Come, for our sister Gordiana is reckoned among the women of the world." This vision, like the former, was followed by illness and death; and by the festival of the Epiphany Aemiliana had joined Tarsilla in the "mansion of light." Thus Gordiana was at last left alone, and Gregory's relation of her godless end concludes, with a touch of comedy, the history of the three sisters. For, freed now from all restraints, the "wickedness" of this young woman so increased, that she actually permitted herself to carry out what she had before secretly desired, and, "forgetful of the fear of God, forgetful of shame and reverence, forgetful of her consecration, she married after a time the steward of her estates." The monastic, aristocratic Pope sighs over the double scandal of a broken vow and a family misalliance, and sums up the story of backsliding with the moral, "*Many are called, but few are chosen.*"

Besides these three aunts, Gregory had one other, named Pateria, the sister probably of Silvia. From the single notice we have of her it appears that Pateria was married and had children, that she suffered from straitened circumstances, and that she resided somewhere in Campania.[1]

[1] *Epp.* i. 37: "Volo autem ut domnae Pateriae, thiae meae, . . . offeras ad calciarium puerorum solidos quadraginta et tritici modios quadringentos." This order was sent to the Papal agent in Campania in the year 591. The

The home of Gregory's childhood was a handsome palace on the slope of the Caelian, abutting on a street named Clivus Scauri,[1] which nearly corresponds to the modern Via di SS. Giovanni e Paolo. It appears to have been a spacious dwelling, containing an atrium, with a fountain of elaborate design. The waters of this spring—doubtless the "spring of Mercury" of classical times—were later believed to possess a miraculous healing potency, and flocks of suffering pilgrims came to test their virtue. It was near the fountain, after the house had been turned into a monastery and dedicated to St. Andrew, that Gregory placed the pictures of the Regionary and his wife which have been described above. In the present day the palace of Gordianus is no longer visible. Centuries have raised the level of the soil, and the church and monastery of San Gregorio, which occupy the site, are entirely modern. In 1890, however, a search in the cellars of the monastery revealed the fact that deep beneath the modern buildings the old house still exists in a marvellous state of preservation, and might easily be excavated without impairing the stability of the church above. Unfortunately, the projected excavation has not been carried out.

The mansion of Gordianus stood in the centre of Imperial Rome. Straight before it rose that "arx imperii," the Palatine Hill, covered with its thickly clustering palaces, and haunted by strange memories of many Emperors. Viewed from without, the stately buildings of the Palatine were still magnificent. Valentinian the Third had put them in repair, and the havoc of Goths and Vandals had made but slight impression on their solid structures. Within, however, was one vast desolation—a wilderness of empty courts and closed apartments, choked with rubbish and strewn with the fragments of broken ornament and statuary. It is true that portions of these buildings were still in use. Theodoric stayed in the Imperial palace in the year 500; and after Rome was restored to the Empire a few officials had their residence here. But a mere corner of the

word "thia" (*θεία*) may mean either paternal or maternal aunt. But since Gregory (*Hom. in Ev.* 38) expressly states "tres pater meus sorores habuit"—*i.e.* Tarsilla, Aemiliana, Gordiana—I presume that Pateria was the sister, not of Gordianus, but of Silvia.

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 6.

Palatine must have sufficed to house the handful of Imperial agents, and to provide an official Roman residence for the Governor at Ravenna. The rest of the buildings, with their halls, baths, galleries, stairways, and innumerable apartments, were abandoned to decay, and in their fading splendour served but to remind men of the brilliant life that had for ever passed away.

On either side of the palace of Gordianus rose stupendous monuments of Roman wealth and luxury. Let us imagine a friend of Gregory's family approaching the Regionary's house about the year 540, from the direction of the Porta Appia, the modern Porta di San Sebastiano. Passing along the Appian Way, the "queen of long roads," the smooth and perfectly fitting stones of which provoked about this time the admiration of Procopius,[1] he would reach before long the Thermae Antoninianae, the magnificent Baths of Caracalla. These huge baths, which could accommodate, it is calculated, no less than sixteen hundred bathers at once, were still in good preservation, for here the hand of the spoiler seems to have been withheld. Had our traveller seen fit to enter, he would have found undimmed as yet the splendour of mosaic pavements and painted ceilings. Here still stood the massive sculptured columns, the seats of polished marble, the huge porphyry vases. Here, above all, remained the masterpieces of art, of which some specimens—the Flora of Naples, the Farnese Hercules, the Farnese Bull, the Venus Callipyge—are the glory and pride of latter-day museums. And yet, for all its beauty, the place had lost its use. The vast swimming-bath, once filled with clear water by a branch aqueduct of the Marcia, had been dry since 537. The motley throngs of bathers that used to assemble here—the chattering gangs of philosophers, the swarms of pickpockets, the spouting poets who had to be driven away with showers of stones, the debauchees in quest of a new intrigue, the great lords, the lackeys, the officials of the Government—came now no more. The Baths of Caracalla were deserted—save for a few loungers who found therein a shady refuge from the blazing sunshine, or for some homeless vagrant, glad to spend a summer night on the carven benches. Had our traveller been a moralist

[1] Procopius *De Bell. Goth.* i. 14.

or a pious Churchman, he would, no doubt, have exulted in the change; for morality was scandalized at the disorders which occurred amid those nude, promiscuous crowds, where sex was not separated from sex, and the Church had ever shown itself the enemy of that luxurious form of cleanliness which was the great delight of the pagan sons of Rome. But whether for good or for ill, it is certain that since 537 the Baths of Caracalla were unused and empty; and already, doubtless, the weeds were pushing through the untrodden floors, and the spiders were weaving thick veils about the sculptured faces of the heroes and the gods.

Leaving the Thermae behind him, the guest of Gordianus would now skirt, on the left, the slopes of the Aventine—once an aristocratic quarter, crowded with sumptuous palaces of nobles and millionaires, but, since the three days' sack in August, 410, a mere unsightly, complicated ruin. Beyond, between this dreary hill and the south-west rise of the Palatine, he would find still standing a gigantic, weather-beaten mass of stone and marble, the far-famed Circus Maximus.[1] But already the vast building was beginning to decay, and portions of its masonry had fallen to the ground. Here, too, was void and silence. The frantic mob, drunk with excitement, no longer screamed and elbowed through the corridors and seats. In former days, as Ammianus tells us,[2] the Circus was for the Roman populace at once "their temple, dwelling, meeting-place —in short, their whole hope and desire." He describes how they quarrelled on the highways over the Blues and the Greens, how grey-beards would swear that the State would certainly be lost unless their favourite colour won, how on the night before the contest many were sleepless through anxiety, and how, when the great day came, they rushed away, before the sun was risen, to secure good places. Even the misfortunes of the State did not, for a long time, quench the popular enthusiasm; and Salvian has recorded his horror of their levity in an often-quoted sentence. "You would suppose," he wrote, "that the whole people of Rome has become glutted with the sardonic herb; it laughs even as it dies."[3] But in Gregory's birth-year

[1] On the Circus, see Cassiodorus *Var.* iii. 51.

[2] Amm. Marc. *Hist.* xxviii. 4.

[3] Salvian. *De Gubernatione Dei* vii. 1: "Nos et in metu captivitatis

things were changed. The games had become rarer and rarer, and only one more chariot-race was destined to be held,—under the auspices of Totila, in the year 549. After that the Circus was abandoned, until time, the weather, and the irreverent hands of thievish builders brought about its final downfall.

The traveller whose footsteps we are following would now pass along the Via Triumphalis, which divides the Palatine and the Caelian. And if, instead of turning aside on the right into Gordianus's house, he were to extend his walk beyond the Arch of Constantine, he would come upon another monument, the most impressive, if not the most beautiful, of all that dignified the neighbourhood of Gregory's home. This was the Flavian Amphitheatre, the symbol of Rome's greatness, and, according to the famous proverb given in Bede, the pledge of her existence.

> "While stands the Colisaeus, Rome shall stand;
> When falls the Colisaeus, Rome shall fall;
> And when Rome falls, with her shall fall the world." [1]

Certainly in the year 540 the Flavian Amphitheatre showed no signs of dissolution. Less than half a century before it had been thoroughly restored by the City Prefect, Decius Marius Venantius Basilius. The monster walls were thus as firm as ever; the tiers of benches, the arcades, the staircases, the porticoes remained unbroken. Nevertheless, like the Circus and the Thermae, the Flavian Amphitheatre was no longer used. The bloody gladiatorial combats had been stopped soon after 404, thanks to the heroism of Telemachus—"the only monk," sneers Gibbon, "who died a martyr in the cause of humanity." The beast-baitings and hunting spectacles continued longer, but the last recorded venationes are those of Anicius Maximus in the year 523.[2] It is possible indeed that, as late as 540, certain less harmful amusements were occasionally here provided for the people—exhibitions of gymnastic, dancing and rope-walking, of performing animals, and the like—but it is scarcely probable. The Gothic monarchy, which had been

ludimus, et positi in mortis timore ridemus. Sardonicis quodammodo herbis omnem Romanum populum putes esse saturatum. Moritur et ridet."

[1] Baeda *Collectanea*, ap. Migne *P. L.* xciv. p. 543.

[2] Cassiod. (*Var.* v. 42) gives a curious description of the venationes, and concludes: "Heu mundi error dolendus! Si esset ullus aequitatis intuitus, tantae divitiae pro vita mortalium deberent dari, quantae in mortes hominum videntur effundi."

liberal in this respect, was falling; and the Byzantine Government had little inclination to court the Roman mob. Hence we may imagine that at this time all the spectacles had ceased. The Colosseum was deserted, and the degenerate Romans had no longer the opportunity of applauding indescribable indecencies on the very spot where their forefathers had been martyred for the faith.

I have lingered amid the surroundings of the house of Gordianus because I feel that this majestic scenery cannot have failed to create a deep impression on the mind of his thoughtful child. Even now, when on some mild spring evening we take our stand on the steps of San Gregorio and gaze across St. Gregory's Avenue towards the grassy ruins of the Palatine, the spell of antiquity is strong upon us, and the soul is stirred with a wondering admiration of vanished things. What then must have been Gregory's feelings when, in the last years of the classical age, he raised his eyes to the yet abiding mansions of the Caesars, or rambled through the ample spaces of the Circus, or watched from some gallery of the Flavian Amphitheatre the sunshine playing on the bronze of Nero's colossal statue? It cannot be doubted that amid these historic places there was engendered in him that ardent patriotism and pride in his Roman race and name for which throughout his later life he was distinguished. And may we not conjecture, further, that the fading glories of the abandoned monuments may have touched his spirit with the gentle melancholy and gravity which appears to have cast a shadow even over his childhood? Growing up amid the relics of a greatness that had passed, daily reminded by the beautiful broken marbles of the vanity of things, he was accustomed to look on the world with sorrowful eyes. The thrill, the vigour, and the joy of life were not for him. Rather he saw a symbol of the world in that vast, desolated palace of the Caesars—a place once re-echoing with the sound of music and the laughter of breathing throngs, but now a sombre, spirit-haunted realm of silence and decay. Beneath this saddening shadow Gregory grew up. He never attained a perfect sanity of view. From his birth he was sick—a victim of the malady of the Middle Ages.

CHAPTER II

THE WORLD OF GREGORY'S CHILDHOOD

Of Gregory's early life no details are recorded in the "Lives," and, in order to get a notion of its general outline, and of the circumstances and scenes amid which it was passed, we are compelled to fall back on secular and ecclesiastical histories like those of Procopius and the Papal Biographer, on antiquarian information supplied by writers such as Cassiodorus, and on the discoveries of recent archaeological research. In this way we are able to reconstruct in some degree the history of the first fifteen years of Gregory's life; we can estimate at least the extent to which he was affected by the stirring events in Italy, can picture his surroundings and society in Rome, and indicate the general course of his education and the nature of his interests and pursuits. The question of Gregory's education will be reserved for treatment in the following chapter. In the present I shall attempt to describe the world of Gregory's childhood—not, indeed, the greater world of the Roman Empire, which concerned the boy only indirectly, but his own immediate world of Italy and the Eternal City. I shall endeavour to represent the state of Italy and its fortunes during the Second Gothic War, the condition of Rome and Roman society, and the situation of the Church, and particularly of the Papacy. But first it will be necessary to give a brief account of a man and a woman, whose faces indeed our saint was never destined to behold, but whose counsels and ambitions were, under Providence, most instrumental in shaping the life and fortunes of him and all his countrymen. I refer, of course, to the rulers of the Roman world, Justinian and Theodora.

(*a*) *The Rulers of the Roman World.*

On that dimly lighted stage of the sixth century two actors play a foremost part. They are the leading characters, in whom the tragedy and the comedy of it centre, and around whose plans and passions the whole world-play is built up. It is difficult for us, looking back across the centuries, clearly to realize their personalities, to strip them of the garb with which tradition and the prejudice of historians have invested them, and see the true Justinian and Theodora as they appeared to their contemporaries in the shining city on the Bosphorus. The character of the man is particularly indistinct. He seems, as it were, to hide himself away deep in the shadow of his own great works, and when we try to grasp his personality, he persistently eludes our hold, and, instead of the flesh-and-blood Justinian, we see before us only the airy domes of St. Sophia or the ponderous volumes of the Roman law. The woman, on the other hand, has been more plainly delineated, but the artist who sketched the portrait was an enemy; hence the colouring of the picture is the darkest, and loathsome details are inserted, the accuracy of which cannot be relied upon. In the case of either, then, it is hard to discern the truth, yet we must endeavour, if we can, to arrive at some idea of the character and work of these two potentates, who governed and oppressed the Roman world when Gregory was a boy.

First, then, Justinian. A fair, fierce-looking, red-cheeked man, with long nose and shaven chin, and curly grizzled hair, rather thin about the crown, carrying his shapely figure with a fine air of distinction, and, although now somewhat past the prime of life, still consciously vigorous with the strength of an iron constitution inherited from a hardy stock of Dacian peasants; —such is our first superficial impression of the Roman Emperor.[1] His virtue attracted notice in a not over-virtuous age. Men remarked upon his chastity, his temperance, his habitual self-restraint, and admired a prince who was satisfied with an abstemious diet, and who cut short the hours allotted to sleep

[1] Joannes Malalas, p. 425 (ed. Bonn); *Chronicon Paschale* vol. i. p. 688 (ed. Bonn); Cedrenus *Hist.* vol. i. p. 642 (ed. Bonn). Procopius *Hist. Arc.* 8 affirms that Justinian resembled the Emperor Domitian.

in order the longer to pursue his studies. Procopius, indeed, accuses him of deliberate, calculating cruelty[1]; but this charge cannot be substantiated. On the contrary, Justinian appears to have been mild and clement, save in some few cases when his suspicions were aroused or his fears excited; although it may be admitted that he never hesitated to sacrifice the well-being of whole masses of his subjects when by doing so he could serve his own ends or the general interests of the State. The man possessed astonishing force of intellect. A musician, a poet, an architect, a student of philosophy, theology, and law, he was acquainted with every branch of the culture of his day. He prided himself on the universality of his knowledge, and on his capacity for taking a prominent personal part in all kinds of various transactions. Yet in practical matters his judgment was oftentimes at fault, and he appears to have been deficient in decision of character.[2] He was a cold, crafty, unbending kind of man; a trifle inhuman, perhaps, in his severely logical way of dealing with problems, yet human in his numerous mistakes, human in his love of magnificence and pompous show, and, above all, human in his passion for Theodora.

Justinian was pre-eminently the autocrat of the Roman Empire. "Of all the princes who reigned at Constantinople," writes Agathias,[3] "he was the first to show himself absolute sovereign of the Romans in fact as well as in name." And certainly no previous Emperor had ever enjoyed a despotism so unfettered. Augustus shared his government with the Senate, Constantine was compelled to reckon with the Church; but Justinian dominated both. Politically he was absolute over a servile aristocracy; ecclesiastically he was absolute over cringing bishops, who suffered him to lecture them and dictate their theological opinions. "Remember," said Caracalla once to his grandmother, Antonia, "that I have power to do everything and over every one." It was just this power

[1] Procop. *Hist. Arc.* 6. 13. Zonaras, vol. iii. p. 151 (ed. Bonn), says: *ἀναπεπταμένας εἶχε τὰς ἀκοὰς πρὸς διαβολήν, ὀξὺς δὲ πρὸς ἄμυναν.* Contrast Joh. Lydus *De Magistrat.* iii. 69.

[2] Procop. *Hist. Arc.* 13 writes: *Ὁ μὲν γὰρ κονιορτοῦ τὰ ἐς τὴν γνώμην κουφότερος ἦν, ὑποκείμενος τοῖς ἀεὶ παράγειν ὅποι ποτ' ἐδόκει βουλομένοις αὐτὸν, ἢν μὴ τὸ πρᾶγμα ἐς φιλανθρωπίαν ἢ ἀκερδίαν ἄγοι, θῶπάς τε λόγους ἐνδελεχέστατα προσιέμενος.* Compare also c. 22.

[3] Agathias *Hist.* v. 14.

that Justinian not only claimed but also exercised. He gathered all the wires into his hands, and his puppets had to dance as he directed. Nor would he ever tolerate the least infraction of obedience, for he himself was perfectly persuaded that "nothing was greater, nothing more sacred, than the Imperial majesty."[1] Like another great autocrat, Justinian might have cried, "The world—it is I."

Absolute Justinian was, and he possessed to the full the absolute sovereign's passion for reshaping and subduing, for moulding his environment in accordance with his will. He was wonderfully successful. His great juristic works have modified the law of every civilized nation. His victories in Italy, Africa, and Spain altered for a time the geography of the Roman world, and determined the course of history. His splendid architectural works connect his name for ever with the perfect culmination of the new forms of Christian art. He tampered with theology, and the decisions which he promulgated were sanctioned by the Church. In the history of industry, of learning, of institutions, of manners, his reign is a landmark—in the history of industry, by reason of the introduction of the silk manufacture into Europe[2]; in the history of learning, by reason of the abolition of the schools at Athens, a measure which dealt a final blow to pagan thought and philosophy, and made education definitely Christian; in the history of institutions, through the extinction in this period of that venerable relic of the past, the consulship; in the history of manners, by reason of the great elaboration of social etiquette and court ceremonial which Justinian instigated and encouraged. Few princes have been associated with so many diverse interests and undertakings, and few have made their influence so widely felt, not only by the men of their own age, but by many succeeding generations. Justinian certainly was not of those whose names are writ in water.

Justinian aimed at unity. He wished for unity in the Empire, East and West being reunited as in the days of Constantine, and welded together under a single government. Hence came the Vandalic and Gothic wars of reconquest. He

[1] *Cod. Just.* I. xiv. 12.

[2] For an account of this, see Zonaras, vol. iii. p. 172, who refers to Procopius *Bell. Goth.* iv. 17. Compare Theophanes of Byzantium, fr. 3.

wished for unity of government, authority being distributed through a carefully graded official hierarchy, but depending ultimately on himself alone. He wished, again, for unity of thought, and this he endeavoured to secure by the suppression of non-Christian speculation through the closing of the Athenian University. Finally, he wished for a religious unity, in which Monophysites might be reconciled with the Orthodox, and the reunited Church of the East with the Catholics of the West. From this last passion resulted the Fifth General Council and the persecution of the unhappy Pope Vigilius.

Justinian was a man of great ideas, but as a practical administrator he must be pronounced a failure. During his reign the Empire fell into a most deplorable and ruinous condition. Externally it was girt about with implacable enemies, who were only waiting for a favourable moment to attack. In the East the Persian wars exhausted the resources of the State; in the West the reduction of the Goths only prepared the way for the incursion of the Lombards. On the north an ever-increasing swarm of Huns and Slaves and Germans gathered about the frontiers and devastated the Balkan provinces. Justinian tried to check the inroads of these barbarians, partly by constructing extensive lines of fortification from the Adriatic to the Black Sea, partly by a shallow, hand-to-mouth diplomacy, which aimed at weakening his enemies by pitting each against the other. Such measures, however, could not establish a lasting security. They only availed for a time to delay, to some extent, an evil which was destined to burst upon the Roman world directly the too-ingenious Emperor was withdrawn from the scene.

Internally the condition of the Empire was not less grave. Justinian was always in need of money, and in order to procure a plentiful supply he encouraged an abominable system of fiscal oppression which converted all classes of his subjects into mere miserable slaves of the Imperial Treasury. Provinces were bled to death, flourishing cities were impoverished, and millions of human beings were reduced to destitution. To save expense, even the State post was partially abolished. The farmers and small proprietors were made desperate by grinding taxes and forced labour. Many surrendered their estates to escape the terrible exactions, many destroyed their oliveyards and vineyards

and demolished their houses. Agriculture was ruined. The merchants were harassed by heavy customs and monopolies. The grants made to the professors of the liberal arts were withdrawn. The wretched curiales were made to drain the cup of bitterness to the very dregs. Even the soldiers were cheated of pay, rations, and promotion. But meanwhile the supplies came in, and with the money scraped together with blood and tears, Justinian was enabled to indulge to the full his lust for building, and to send general after general to win back the allegiance of the revolted West.[1] It is scarcely wonderful, however, that the people, whose interests were remorselessly sacrificed to the Emperor's vanity and avarice, should have loaded Justinian's name with execrations, and have told one another tremblingly that this pitiless despot was in very truth a "demon."[2]

A dull, grey atmosphere envelops, as in a shroud, the concluding years of Justinian's reign. From the banks of the Euphrates to those of the Tagus, the world presented a dreadful spectacle of ruin and decay. A profound gloom settled on the minds of men, and Justinian himself became infected with the unnamed, brooding melancholy. Since he took the plague in 542, he was never quite the same. He grew weary, morose, spiritless. Trivial matters occupied his thoughts, and he seems to have become indifferent even to the great schemes which once so absorbed him, and to which he owed his fame. This was the period of his studies in theology, and of the Fifth General Council. And Procopius preserves for us a touching picture of this once-brilliant Emperor, sitting up far into the night in the company of a few very aged priests, poring over the sacred rolls, and laboriously constructing arguments concerning the ultimate damnation of dead men.[3] Thus the master of a thousand cities shut himself up within his palace library and left the world to its fate. Like the little Gregory in the ruinous

[1] Evagrius *Hist.* iv. 29; Procopius *Hist. Arc. passim*; Zonaras, vol. iii. pp. 151, 152: *ἀφειδὴς πρὸς χρημάτων ἐξάντλησιν καὶ πρὸς συλλογὴν αὐτῶν ἀφειδέστερος. τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἀνήλισκεν εἰς οἰκοδομάς, τὰ δὲ ἵν αὐτῷ κατορθοῖντο ὅσα οἱ ἐτύγχανε πρὸς βουλῆς, τὰ δὲ εἰς πολέμους καὶ τὰς πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθισταμένους ταῖς ἑαυτοῦ θελήσεσιν ἔριδας. ὅθεν ἀεὶ χρημάτων δεόμενος ἐξελέγετο ταῦτα ἐκ τρόπων οὐκ εὐαγῶν καὶ χάριτας ἤδει τοῖς προφάσεις αὐτῷ τοῦ ἀργυρολογεῖν ἐφευρίσκουσι.*

[2] Procop. *Hist. Arc.* 12.

[3] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iii. 32.

city on the Tiber, so the tired old Justinian in his fine new Rome on the Bosphorus learnt the sad lesson of the vanity of things, and moodily sank beneath the oppression of the Middle Ages.

Let us turn now to Theodora, the beautiful, beguiling creature whom Justinian loved, and whose strange elevation to the throne "cannot," as Gibbon caustically remarks, "be applauded as the triumph of female virtue." The daughter of a Cypriot named Acacius, who had been a keeper of the wild beasts belonging to the Green faction in the Byzantine Circus, Theodora commenced life as a pantomimist and ballet-dancer. An account of her public performances would not be edifying, still less would be the story of her private amours, which became a byword in Constantinople, Alexandria, and all the cities of the East. I am inclined to believe, however, that in this matter Procopius has exaggerated the scandal.[1] That Theodora united the profession of actress with that of a courtesan is pretty evident. But her record was probably no worse than that of modern ladies who have acquired an unenviable notoriety on the London or Paris music-hall stage.

The woman was undoubtedly beautiful. Even her bitter enemy acknowledges that it would be impossible for any mortal to express her loveliness either in words or work of art.[2] She was of medium height, with a figure faultless in its proportions. Her complexion was marble-pale,—dead white, but not sickly; her features were delicate and regular, her expression keen and alert. A pair of magnificent brilliant eyes lit up her face and gave to it a sparkling animation. A portrait of her may still be seen in the famous contemporary mosaic in the Church of San Vitale at Ravenna. But this queenly Theodora, bedecked with her favourite pearls, and surrounded by the ladies of her court, has certainly less of comeliness than might have been expected after the enthusiastic praises of Procopius. Perhaps, however, the unnamed artist of the sixth century was not well skilled in the delineation of feminine beauty.

Theodora's powers of fascination must have been exceptional.

[1] Procop. *Hist. Arc.* 9. (For a valuable note on the *Hist. Arcana*, and a brief review of some of the theories about it, see Bury *History of the Later Roman Empire* vol. i. pp. 359–364.)

[2] Procop. *De Aed.* 11; cf. *Hist. Arc.* 10.

Yet even so it is amazing that the prudent, middle-aged Justinian should have fallen a victim to her witchlike spells. Certainly this woman acted with consummate cleverness. To win Justinian's respect she retired from the public gaze, adopted a comparatively decent mode of life, and affected an honourable poverty. Then, with her charm, her wit, her alluring graces and attractions, she laid siege to the heart of the austere and solemn student. Justinian was completely captivated. He lavished upon his mistress his uncle's treasure and his own. He caused her to be ennobled with the title of Patrician, and at last he went so far as to form a project of uniting to himself, by the tie of legal marriage, the most infamous woman in all Constantinople. Of course there were difficulties. The Empress Euphemia, a highly respectable lady, would not hear of such a match, and she persuaded her husband to refuse his sanction. But after a while the Empress died, Justin was cajoled, the few remaining obstacles were disposed of, and Theodora the Ballet-dancer became the wedded wife of the most prominent and powerful personage of the age.

In 527 Justinian was elevated to the purple, and a diadem was placed upon the head of Theodora as his independent colleague in the sovereignty of the Empire. Never surely did actress rise to such a station. She, whose business had been to provide amusement for the obscene, pestiferous rabble, was now the acknowledged "mistress" of the Roman world, the arbitress of the destinies of nations. The mob that once had shrieked with laughter over her immodest antics, now hailed her with respectful acclamations as she passed in state procession through the streets. The great people who formerly had scorned her—the senators, bishops, generals, the proud officials of the Empire—now vied with one another in paying her their court, and abased themselves to implore her all-powerful intercession. The Emperor himself was entirely her thrall,[1] and remained throughout her lifetime the very model of an indulgent husband. It was Theodora's golden hour; and we cannot wonder if we see her sometimes rapt beyond all bounds in the exultation of her triumph.

[1] Zonaras (vol. iii. p. 151) says: Ἄρξαντος δὲ Ἰουστινιανοῦ οὐκ εἰς μοναρχίαν ἡ βασιλεία κατέστη, ἀλλ' εἰς διπλοῦν τὸ κράτος μεμέριστο. οὐδὲν γὰρ ἧττον τοῦ κρατοῦντος, εἰ μὴ καὶ μᾶλλον, ἡ κοινωνὸς αὐτῷ τοῦ βίου δεδύνητο.

The faults imputed to the Empress are those which might naturally be looked for in a person whose moral principles were feeble, and who was suddenly transplanted from a station of insignificance to one of almost unlimited power. Theodora was luxurious and pleasure-loving. She slept much, rising late and prolonging her midday siesta till the evening. She appreciated the enjoyments of the bath, and spent many hours of every day in the cultivation of her beauty. Her magnificent gilded apartments were filled with a profusion of priceless treasures, and the whole world was ransacked to furnish her table with rare or unseasonable delicacies. In her behaviour towards the magnates of the capital she was slighting and capricious. The trembling senators who came to do her homage were kept for hours confined in stuffy ante-rooms, and when at last they were admitted to the presence, their Imperial mistress, lolling on her cushions, received them with every mark of insult and contempt, and made them the laughing-stock of eunuchs and serving-women.[1] It cannot be denied that she was vindictive and by nature cruel. Those who had really injured her she never forgot or forgave. Beneath her glittering palace was a "Tartarus" of dungeons, and here her wretched victims were scourged and tortured, and, buried for years in the abysmal darkness, frequently lost their sanity and eyesight.[2]

It would be a mistake, however, to think that Theodora was all bad. She was certainly no Messalina. Whatever may have been the scandals of her girlhood, her married life at least was without reproach, and not even her worst enemy could accuse her of infidelity to Justinian. She was religious, too, after her fashion—a Monophysite, yet genuinely, it seems, devout. Nor was she incapable of kindly emotions and even of virtuous acts. Her charities were widespread, and towards women in distress she showed peculiar kindness. We see her restoring to one a husband,[3] to another a lost lover.[4] And in remembrance, perhaps, of former days, she did everything in her power to ameliorate the lot of actresses and fallen women. Five hundred of the latter she rescued from the streets and placed in safe keeping in a monastery. And we cannot doubt that Justinian's legislation against disorderly houses,[5] and the measure which rendered it

[1] Procop. *Hist. Arc.* 15. [2] *Ibid.* 4.
[3] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iii. 31. [4] Procop. *Hist. Arc.* 3. [5] *Novel.* 14.

illegal to force a woman on to the stage against her will,[1] were alike inspired by the counsels of an Empress who had once been an actress and a prostitute herself. Moreover, Theodora was gifted with a courage, intelligence and political sagacity not unworthy of her station.[2] She proved herself a true helpmeet for Justinian. She could enter fully into his projects, and give him real assistance by her sound advice. And, above all, when in 532 the Nika sedition broke out, and the Emperor himself grew frightened and his ministers were panic-stricken, Theodora restored confidence and steadied a tottering throne by her intrepid words, "Empire is a fair shroud."[3] This woman, clearly, was not devoid of noble qualities. Had the circumstances of her youth been other than they were, she might have left behind her a fragrant memory and an honoured name. But she could never entirely overcome the disabilities of her upbringing. Hence, by most people in the present day, Theodora, when remembered at all, is vaguely thought of merely as a type of the nameless infamies and outrageous passions of an absolutism that has long since gone to dust. Critical research, however, pronounces a more charitable verdict.

Such were the rulers of the world in the year 540. It remains to consider the condition of Italy, and to remark the way in which the ambitious plans of the Byzantine despots affected the life and fortunes of Roman Gregory.

(*b*) *The Condition of Italy and the Second Gothic War.*

It was one of Justinian's aims to re-establish the broken unity of his Empire by the conquest of the West. This ambitious task was commenced by the overthrow of the Vandal kingdom in Africa. But Justinian could not stop short with this, nor would he have wished to do so, even had it been possible. Before ever the Byzantine armies set sail for Africa, John of Cappadocia had given a warning to the Emperor, "If Africa should be reduced, it cannot be preserved unless Italy and Sicily be conquered in addition."[4] The prince acknowledged the cogency of his minister's argument, yet remained

[1] *Cod. Just.* I. iv. 33.
[2] Joh. Lydus *De Magistrat.* iii. 69: κρείττων τῶν ὄντων ὁτεδήποτε ἐπὶ συνέσει.
[3] Procop. *Bell. Pers.* i. 24.
[4] Procop. *Bell. Vand.* i. 10.

unshaken in his purpose. He ordered his troops to embark, thereby pledging his honour to the destruction, not only of the kingdom of the Vandals, but also of that of the Ostrogoths. It is improbable that Belisarius, the commander-in-chief, was aware of the full extent of his master's ambitions. But it is clear to us now that from the beginning Justinian was resolved to win back the province of the Western Caesars and to reincorporate it with the Empire.

Every student of the history of the sixth century knows the story of the great undertaking. Justinian's ambitious schemes were almost justified by their remarkable success. The Vandal kingdom was overthrown; Sicily was won; and at last, after four years of war, Italy itself was conquered, and the Gothic king Witigis with the noblest of his following and all his treasure was carried away in triumph to Constantinople. In the year of Gregory's birth the First Gothic War was finished. The strength of the Goths was broken; the flower of the fighting men was cut off; their king was a captive; their kingdom was in the hands of the Greeks; and once more the Italian peninsula had become a province of the Empire.

Now, Justinian's first anxiety was to make his conquests pay. No sooner, therefore, was Italy reclaimed than he handed it over to the cruel mercies of a gang of civil servants, who were commissioned to extort money in every way from the unfortunate provincials. At the head of the financial administration was an abominable rogue, Alexander the Logothete, nicknamed "the Scissors," from his alleged proficiency in clipping gold coins without apparently altering their shape.[1] This man, with a retinue of scoundrels like himself, swooped down upon the country and organized a campaign of universal plunder. It is impossible to exaggerate the rascality of these financial agents. Men mostly of mean condition, who by surreptitious intrigue had wormed themselves into a place, utterly destitute of shame and scruples, they were bent solely on accumulating fortunes for themselves, and never hesitated to perpetrate the grossest and most scandalous frauds when they were able to do so without danger of detection. In the case of Italy this risk was very slight. The agents were all in collusion with one another, the scene of

[1] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iii. 1.

their transactions was far removed from the seat of government, and it was well known that Justinian was not disposed to be hard on the peccadillos of men who were continually forwarding substantial sums to the Imperial Treasury. Moreover, the oppressed Italians were unable to defend themselves, and could only suffer in dumb anguish the outrages of their persecutors. Thus the sharks of Alexander had it all their own way. Not content with imposing an outrageous assessment on the fortunes of the Romans, they endeavoured to increase the profits by all manner of fraudulent devices. Sometimes they refused to give receipts; sometimes they gave them in an invalid form. Sometimes they disputed the validity of those which were correctly drawn up. All Italians who had engaged in financial dealings with the Goths were ordered to produce accounts, and when such accounts were not forthcoming, they were compelled to refund in full. False weights and measures were used; the accounts presented by the Imperial auditors were shamelessly falsified; and extra exactions were enforced by terrorism and violence. Of course the greater part of the money thus accumulated was sent to Constantinople, but much of it remained in the hands of the nefarious agents, who fattened and grew wealthy on the pillage of their victims.[1]

The miseries of Italy were further augmented by the rapacity of the Byzantine commanders and their troops. When Belisarius returned to the East in 540, he left behind him eleven generals, to whom was entrusted the task of completing the subjugation of the country. These generals, however, divided by mutual jealousies and suspicions, were unable to agree upon any plan for the reduction of the enemy, and, instead of carrying on the war, devoted their whole attention to amassing private fortunes. They came to an understanding with the tax-gatherers, and in concert with them arranged for the thorough spoliation of their several districts. The common soldiers, as was natural, followed the example of their officers. Military pay was extremely irregular, promotion had to be purchased, and offences against discipline were at this time punished with heavy fines. Hence the soldiers, being in need of money, sought to provide for

[1] The logothetes were awarded one-twelfth of all the monies they recovered for the Treasury. Such a system of payment, of course, was a direct incentive to extortion.

themselves at the expense of the conquered; and this the officers permitted them to do so long as they themselves received a percentage of the booty. Thus Italy was delivered into the hand of the spoiler, and insatiable avarice stripped her bare. What the logothete left the general took, and what the general left the common soldier carried away.

The military regulation, in accordance with which offences against discipline might be condoned by payment of a fine, was a further source of misery to the Italians. For, when a soldier had to fear only a pecuniary mulct, he had the less scruple in committing offences against the public peace. Thus the property and persons of the unfortunate provincials were never safe. And if we would realize to the full the horror of such a situation, we must remember that these soldiers of the Imperial armies were Romans only in name. Even of Greeks there was but a small proportion. The bulk of the troops consisted of a heterogeneous medley of barbarians—Moors, Huns, Persians, Gepids, Heruls—knowing not a word of Latin, and scarcely any Greek, and wild with all the untamed passions of the lawless savage. To the unbridled lusts and boundless avarice of these fierce men, the miserable inhabitants of Italy were abandoned. Their sufferings can be paralleled only by the worst of those endured in recent times by the wretched subjects of the Turkish Government.

But in addition to all these troubles, the countrymen of Gregory were exposed to the torments of famine and pestilence. Procopius has left us a grim description of the country and the people in the last year of the war.[1] The fields, which for two years had been left uncultivated, were silent and deserted. The inhabitants of Tuscany betook themselves to the mountains, where they fed on the acorns which they gathered in the forests. The dwellers in the Aemilia flocked into Picenum; but famine followed hard at their heels, and in Picenum itself not less than fifty thousand peasants perished of starvation. The whole of the central and northern part of Italy was transformed into a barren wilderness. The aspect of the people themselves was shocking in the extreme. Horribly emaciated, their flesh consumed away for want of

[1] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* ii. 20.

nourishment, and their skin dried up like leather and just clinging to their bones; their complexions, surcharged with bile, a vivid yellow which gradually changed to black, giving them the appearance of burnt-out torches; their eyes terrible with a lurking look of horror or the glare of downright madness; their digestions so ruined that many were killed by the food when at last it came; these miserable, famine-ridden scarecrows would totter out into the country to seek for grass or herbs wherewith they might allay the gnawing of their hunger. Sometimes as they kneeled down and tried to pluck the herbage from the ground their strength failed them and they collapsed. And where they fell, there they lay and died. No one buried them. Even the carrion birds found it not worth while to attack their fleshless corpses. Instances of cannibalism occurred. Two women, who lived together in a cottage near Rimini, made a practice of enticing wayfarers to their house, murdering them in their sleep, and devouring their bodies. Seventeen men they so disposed of; the eighteenth awoke at the critical moment, forced the hags to confess everything, and afterwards killed them both. Particularly grievous were the sufferings of the children abandoned by their desperate parents. Procopius has a curious story of one baby, deserted by its natural mother, and adopted and suckled by a she-goat. Other women had compassionately attempted to take charge of the infant, but the animal frustrated all their efforts to deprive it of its nurseling.[1]

Amid such wretchedness it was almost a relief when war broke out once more. Belisarius had broken the power of the Goths, but he had not destroyed it. The city of Pavia still remained in their hands, and the incapacity and slackness of the Imperial generals allowed them time to rally and reorganize their forces. Towards the end of 541 (after the short reigns of Ildibad and of Eraric, a Rugian[2]), Baduila, Ildibad's nephew, better known to history under the name of Totila, was elected king of the Goths, and with his accession commenced the second act of the Gothic war.

Of all the Gothic princes with whom we are acquainted, Totila is perhaps the most amiable. A truly romantic figure,

[1] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* ii. 17.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 1, 2.

the knight-errant of the sixth century, he wins all our sympathy as the noble-hearted champion of a fallen cause and an oppressed people. His personal character is as attractive as that of any popular hero of the Round Table. Chivalry, courage, purity, generosity, conspicuously distinguished him; and to these knightly virtues were added brilliant qualities of generalship and statecraft. He was gallant, in the best sense, and ever ready to protect the weak and the helpless. Once one of his guards, a brave and popular soldier, outraged the daughter of a Calabrian. When Totila heard of it, undeterred by the entreaties and even by the menaces of his army, he put the offender to death. In the sack of Rome he expressly ordered that the women should be spared; and hearing that a certain patrician lady was threatened by the soldiers, he intervened and rescued her. Even towards his enemies he exhibited a lofty magnanimity; and when Naples surrendered, he humanely regulated the diet of the people lest a surfeit of food should harm them, and he supplied the surrendering garrison with horses and a safe-conduct to the gates of Rome. The great Belisarius was not ashamed to condescend at times to the doubtful shifts of war; but no such doings are recorded against Totila. Only against the Sicilians was his hostility inveterate, and these had in a special way provoked it by their treachery and ingratitude. Further, amid his triumphs, Totila was ever anxious to make an honourable peace. Over and over again did he open negotiations with Justinian for that end, but the pride and obstinacy of the Emperor caused all such attempts to fail. The conflict accordingly continued; but its incidental evils were, for the Italians at least, alleviated by the magnanimity of the man who publicly maintained the principle that success would only attend those who respected right and justice.[1]

It is somewhat strange to find that, while a semi-pagan like Procopius does ample justice to the character of Totila, a Christian saint and bishop, as was Gregory, can find not a single word to utter in his praise. "Perfidy," "mad fury," "savage cruelty,"—these are the only qualities which Gregory sees, or thinks he sees, in the noblest of the Goths.[2] Indeed, had our

[1] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iii. 21.

[2] Greg. *Dial.* ii. 14, 15; iii. 11, 12, 13. The incidents related in *Dial.* iii.

information respecting Totila been limited to the references in the *Dialogues*, we should have pictured him as nothing better than a bold swashbuckling captain, with the instincts and disposition of a furious beast. In Gregory's excuse, however, it may be remembered that Totila was an Arian; and nothing that an Arian could say or do would be likely to find favour with the most orthodox of Popes. Moreover, Gregory belonged to the senatorial class, which suffered most during the Second Gothic War. Gregory would himself be just old enough to feel and recollect the horrors of the siege of Rome in 546; and when in after-life he looked back upon those dreadful days, it is not unnatural that he should harbour some bitterness against the man whom he regarded as the author of all the suffering. None the less, however, Gregory's criticisms of Totila are grossly unjust, and require to be corrected from authorities less prejudiced.

So soon as Totila took command the fortunes of the Goths in Italy underwent a change. After frustrating an attempt of the Roman generals to capture Verona, the Gothic army won a brilliant victory at Faenza, and followed this up with another in the valley of Mugello. This was the prelude to the recovery of Central and Southern Italy. Passing Rome by for the moment, Totila marched into the southern provinces, carrying all before him. In 543 Naples itself surrendered, and the South again acknowledged the Gothic sovereignty.[1] It was probably on this march to the siege of Naples that the king paid a memorable visit to St. Benedict at Monte Cassino, and listened awe-struck to the famous prophecy: "Much evil doest thou; much evil hast thou done; refrain thyself now from unrighteousness. Thou shalt go over the sea; shalt enter Rome. Nine years shalt thou reign; in the tenth thou shalt die."[2]

After securing the South, Totila proceeded to make good his position in Central Italy. Fermo, Ascoli, Spoleto, Assisi fell before his arms, and Perugia was closely invested, though it still

might, if true, establish against Totila the charge of cruelty. But Procopius, who is a far better authority, gives us a very different impression of his character. Cf. Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iii. 6, 8, 36, etc. Yet even Procopius gives one instance of cruelty (iii. 6).

[1] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iii. 3–7.

[2] Greg. *Dial.* ii. 15.

held out. At length he was ready for the greatest undertaking of all—the blockade of Rome.

Meanwhile, in 544, the veteran Belisarius had once again set foot in Italy. But in the broken man who coasted round the head of the Adriatic, and took up his quarters at Ravenna, it was difficult to recognize the celebrated conqueror who had led away captive the successors of Genseric and Theodoric, and had filled Constantinople with their golden spoils. Of this early Belisarius Procopius has left us a portrait.[1] A tall and handsome man was he, sober and chaste and liberal; a general adored by his soldiers; a tactician, "daring without rashness, prudent without fear, slow or rapid in attacking the enemy according to the exigencies of the moment"; a man, however, whose military genius was not, it seems, of the highest order, and whose private character was warped and twisted, mainly through his inordinate, blindly doting fondness for his evil-minded wife. This woman, indeed, was the undoing of Belisarius. All the unsavoury story of the scandalous amour, the husband's jealousy, the unfaithful wife's revenge, may be read by those who are curious in such matters in the pages of the Byzantine historian.[2] Here it is sufficient to observe that the spirit of Belisarius had been crushed by domestic troubles, while his external fortunes had been injuriously affected by the jealous suspicion of Justinian and the relentless hostility of Theodora. A disgraced and humbled man, Belisarius returned to the scene of his former triumphs to straighten out, as best he might, the tangled skein of Italian history.

Towards the close of 545 Totila invested Rome.[3] If, as is probable, Gordianus and his family were shut up in the city during the siege, their sufferings must have been acute. Rome was defended by Bessas, the general, with a garrison of some three thousand Imperial troops. The personal bravery of the commander is unquestioned, but, like all the rest of the generals of the Empire, he was excessively avaricious, and did not hesitate to turn even the famine of the people into a source of profit to himself. The corn in the public granaries was sold to wealthy citizens for extortionate sums, and as the pressure of starvation became more intense the market-price of provisions rose. A

[1] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iii. 1. [2] Procop. *Hist. Arc.* 1–4.
[3] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iii. 17.

quarter of wheat fetched more than £20, an ox was sold for £30, a filthy mixture of one part flour to three parts bran cost over £5. As time went on animal food was scarcely procurable. Even dogs, rats, and mice were greedily devoured, and a cut from a dead horse was reckoned an exceptional luxury. The poorer citizens were reduced to a diet of nettles, which they cooked with care to prevent them stinging their lips and throat. Some were forced by the pangs of hunger to consume yet more loathsome food. Heart-rending scenes were witnessed. One Roman father, driven frantic by the piteous cries of his children, walked calmly with his family to the nearest bridge over the Tiber, and there, veiling his face with his mantle, flung himself headlong into the river, in full view of his five little ones and of passers-by. The general, gloating over his treasure, was blind to these horrors; but some civilians made noble efforts to alleviate the distress. Rusticiana, daughter of Symmachus and widow of Boethius, gave away her entire fortune, so that she was herself reduced to destitution; and Pelagius, deacon of the Roman Church, was scarcely less generous. But the liberality of a few could avail little amidst the universal famine. At last the citizens, in desperation, flocked in a body to the Palatine and implored the Greek governor to end their sufferings in any way—either to feed them, or to kill them, or to permit them to quit the city. Bessas made a callous speech, refusing absolutely to accede to any of these requests. Later, however, their continued importunity, backed by a substantial bribe, induced him to change his mind, and he suffered a certain number to depart. But many of the fugitives either died of weakness on the open road or were intercepted as they endeavoured to escape through the enemy's lines.

The siege went on. Belisarius, in the spring of 545, had written to Justinian urgently requesting money and troops. His messenger, however, delayed in Constantinople, and for several months no reply was vouchsafed to his application. When at length the tardy reinforcements arrived in Italy, Belisarius took up a position at Portus, and from there he made a gallant effort to convey provisions into Rome. His plan, however, was frustrated on the point of success by the folly and disobedience of his lieutenant Isaac, and by the failure of

Bessas to co-operate on his side for the relief of the city.[1] Then Belisarius, bitterly chagrined, fell sick of a fever, and the last lingering hopes of the beleaguered Romans flickered out.

Now the food was almost gone. Rich and poor alike were compelled to support life on grass and nettles. Even the soldiers had to go without their rations, and had scarcely strength sufficient to take their posts upon the ramparts. All discipline was neglected. The sentries, if they would, might slumber at their stations; the officers ceased to go the rounds. The citizens refused to help to man the walls. Soon disaffection spread among the demoralized troops. Four Isaurian soldiers entered into treaty with Totila, and on December 17, 546, betrayed Rome to the besiegers. Bessas, indeed, had received warning of the conspiracy, but, being wholly immersed in money-making, had with almost incredible carelessness disregarded it, so that when the end came it took him by surprise. Amid the wild panic and confusion he had not time even to remove his ill-gotten treasure, but as Totila and his Goths entered the city by the Asinarian Gate, the Roman general, with the remainder of his troops, fled for his life through another. A few wealthy nobles, who still had horses left to carry them, accompanied him.

The Goths poured into the city. Before them stretched a network of empty streets, lined with deserted palaces and temples. Hardly a creature was to be seen. In all Rome, so Procopius says, only five hundred people remained alive,[2] and these lurked hidden in the dark corners of the houses or had fled for refuge to the tomb of St. Peter. Nothing but the blare of trumpets and the shouts of the invaders broke the deathlike stillness, with now and then the scream of some wretched Roman who was dragged from his concealment and massacred. The number of men killed, however, was insignificant. The women, in accordance with the king's express orders, were all spared.

While his troops were pillaging the city, Totila marched in procession to the Basilica of St. Peter. Here he was confronted by the Archdeacon Pelagius, bearing in his hands a

[1] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iii. 19.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 20.

copy of the Holy Gospels. The Churchman pleaded for the lives of the Romans. "What!" cried Totila, "so Pelagius is not now too proud to become a suppliant." "I am a suppliant," replied the archdeacon; "God has made us now your subjects, and as your subjects we should meet with your mercy." Totila admired the man's courage, and gave orders that the massacre should cease.

We do not know what became of Gordianus at this time. Possibly, being a wealthy man, he was able to accompany Bessas in his hasty flight, and get away eventually to his estate in Sicily. More probably, however, hampered as he was by wife and children, he remained in Rome, and, as we may suppose, together with Olybrius, Maximus, and other nobles, sought an asylum near the body of St. Peter. His anxiety for himself and his family must have been great, for in the first flush of his anger Totila doomed all the captured senators to slavery.[1] The prayers of Pelagius, however, obtained for them a gentler treatment, and they were ultimately placed in confinement in different fortresses in Campania, from which in the following year some of them were rescued by the Imperialists and sent for safety to the island of Sicily.[2] Whether therefore Gordianus escaped with Bessas or surrendered to Totila's mercy, the probability is that in 547 he, with Silvia and Gregory, was residing on his property in Sicily, waiting for a time when he could without danger resume his duties in Rome.

The events of the next two years may be passed over lightly. The few hundred citizens who survived the siege of Rome were removed by Totila into Campania, and the city was utterly denuded of inhabitants. A third of the circuit of the walls was pulled down, and some houses, especially in the Trasteverine quarter, were set on fire. It is said that Totila was not content with this, but actually threatened to destroy all the monumental buildings and to turn the capital of the Caesars into a sheep-walk.[3] But this mad project—if ever it was seriously entertained—was happily averted, thanks to the representations of Belisarius.

[1] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iii. 21.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 26.

[3] *Ibid.* 22; cf. Marcellini Continuator *ad ann.* 547. Jordanes (*De Regn. Succ.*) has the expression, "demolita Roma"—an absurd exaggeration. Greg. *Dial.* ii. 15 proves that Rome did not seriously suffer through any violence of Totila.

The sick general roused himself to write to Totila, pleading for the existence of the Eternal City. He urged the king to consider that, if he was victorious in the war, Rome would be his fairest possession; whereas, if he failed, the preservation of the place would give him a claim upon the gratitude of the Emperor. On the other hand, the destruction of Rome would bring upon him the abhorrence of the entire world and the execration of posterity. The Goth, with his usual reasonableness, allowed himself to be convinced, suspended the work of demolition, and retired into Lucania. For forty days Rome was utterly abandoned and desolate. Then Belisarius, with magnificent audacity, reoccupied the city, roughly repaired the walls with any rude materials that came to hand, dug out the ditch, and barricaded the vacant spaces of the gates. The Romans dispersed in Campania flocked back to their beloved home, and when Totila, by forced marches, arrived once more upon the scene, he was unable to effect an entrance. Repelled in three assaults, the Goths could only sullenly retire.[1]

This was the last great feat of Belisarius in Italy. After some months of desultory fighting in the south, during which his plans were continually thwarted by the negligence and disobedience of his subordinates, he begged to be recalled, and quitted Italy for ever in September, 548.[2]

[1] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iii. 24.

[2] The end of this brave but unhappy warrior may be briefly related. Ten years later, in 558, the Kotrigur Huns, under their king, Zabergan, crossed the Danube and passed into Thrace. Thence one detachment marched into Greece, others ravaged the Chersonese, and the rest took their way towards Constantinople and penetrated to within eighteen miles of the city. In his extremity Justinian once again called on the old general to take the field, and Belisarius marched out on his last campaign. With only three hundred veterans and a rabble of untrained rustics he managed to repulse the Huns, who withdrew from the city, and were eventually bribed by the Emperor to return to their homes beyond the Danube (Agathias *Hist.* v. 11, *sqq.*). The great service of Belisarius was rewarded, as usual, by ingratitude. He was coldly received by the Emperor and the Court, and continued out of favour. In 562 he was even accused of conspiracy; his fortune was sequestered, and for eight months he was in deep disgrace (Malalas, pp. 493, 494; Theophanes *A. M.* 6055). His innocence, it is true, was in the end established, and his honours restored to him, but he did not long survive his acquittal. In March, 565, Belisarius died—a noble man, a brilliant soldier, and a notable example for the warning of those who put their trust in princes. (For the apocryphal story of the blindness and beggary of Belisarius, see the Author of the *Antiquitates Constantinopolitanae* (ed. Paris) p. 7, and Joannes Tzetzes *Chil.*

The next year Totila recaptured Rome.[1] The siege was short, and unaccompanied by the horrors of the former. The Roman general, Diogenes, had taken care to fill the granaries, and, moreover, had sown with corn large tracts of land within the city walls. There was, therefore, no fear of famine; though the spectacle of waving corn-fields on the site of what had once been the most densely populated region on the surface of the globe must have been to the Romans a melancholy token of their city's downfall. As before, Isaurian treachery unbarred the gates, and Totila entered, a second time, in triumph. But his policy was now entirely altered. He showed the greatest clemency to the vanquished garrison; he made an effort to repair the buildings of Rome; he condescended even to amuse the people by a chariot-race in the Circus Maximus. Moreover, he issued a proclamation inviting all the exiled Romans to return to their homes and resume their accustomed life. It is probable that Gordianus responded to this call. Anxiety to reclaim his property on the Caelian, as well as the necessity of resuming the official superintendence of his Region, would hasten his return. And at this time, perhaps, Rome was the safest place for a Roman noble. Accordingly, we may conjecture that in 549 little Gregory—now, according to our chronology, nine years of age—took up again his residence in the city of which he was afterwards destined to become the Bishop and Father.

The war dragged wearily on. Totila, in 550, carried his arms to Sicily, and disquieting rumours doubtless reached Gordianus of the spoliation of his rich possessions in the island. Other reports too were circulated in the Fora—that Sardinia had submitted to the Goths, that Germanus, husband of Witigis' widow, was coming to claim the allegiance of both Goths and Romans, then that Germanus had perished at Sardica, that Totila's fleet had been defeated at Sinigaglia, and the siege of Ancona had been raised, that Artabanes had recovered Sicily for the Empire.[2] These and other stories passed from mouth to

iii. 334–348; and for a criticism of the fable, Mahon *Life of Belisarius* pp. 441–473; Finlay *History of Greece* i. 429–431; Hodgkin *Italy and her Invaders* iv. 537–539.)

[1] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iii. 36.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 39, 40; iv. 23, 24.

mouth, debated and canvassed by excited groups in the piazzas and under the porticoes.

At last came tidings of overwhelming import. It was reported in the city that Justinian had given commission to the eunuch Narses to come to Italy and end the war.

It has been remarked of Justinian that he was always particularly happy in his choice of instruments for the execution of his designs. Tribonian the lawyer, Anthemius the architect, John the money-getting prefect, Belisarius the soldier, were, all of them, men peculiarly adapted for the work which they were set to do. Not less so was Narses, the Persarmenian. A little man, with a feeble, puny body, but an active and powerful brain,[1] reared from his childhood in a hot-house atmosphere of plot and court intrigue, a past master in all the wiles and windings of diplomacy, gifted with a profound knowledge of men which enabled him to handle difficult affairs with successful skill, Narses had rapidly come to the front. After filling the office of Chartulary of the Imperial Bedchamber, he was promoted to the post of Grand Chamberlain, thus becoming one of the highest officials in the Empire. By a timely service, rendered during the sedition of the Nika, he had won the gratitude and confidence of Justinian,[2] and his influence with his master was powerful enough even to loosen the strings of the Imperial purse. But with all classes his popularity was great. The people liked him for his generosity. The troops liked him because he secured them their arrears of pay, looked after their interests, and was liberal in rewarding deeds of valour.[3] The Catholics respected a minister of rigid orthodoxy, and a general

[1] Procopius (*Bell. Goth.* ii. 13) writes: ὁ δὲ Ναρσῆς οὗτος εὐνοῦχος μὲν ἦν καὶ τῶν βασιλικῶν χρημάτων ταμίας, ἄλλως δὲ ὀξὺς καὶ μᾶλλον ἢ κατ' εὐνοῦχον δραστήριος. Agathias (*Hist.* i. 16): ἦν γὰρ ὁ Ναρσῆς ἔμφρων ἐς τὰ μάλιστα καὶ δραστήριος, καὶ δεινὸς ἁρμόσασθαι τῷ παρεμπίπτοντι, καὶ παιδείας μὲν αὐτῷ οὔ τι μάλα μετῆν, οὐδὲ τὰ τῆς εὐγλωττίας ἐπεφρόντιστο, φύσεως δὲ ὅγε δεξιότητι διέπρεπε, καὶ παραστῆσαι οἷός τε ἦν λόγῳ τὰ βεβουλευμένα· καὶ ταῦτα τομίας γε ὤν, καὶ ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις τρυφερώτερον ἀνατεθραμμένος. ἦν δὲ ἄρα καὶ τὸ σῶμα βραχὺς, καὶ ἐς ἰσχνότητα ἐκδεδιητήμενος. τὸ δὲ ἀνδρεῖον καὶ μεγαλουργὸν ἐς τοσοῦτον ἐκέκτητο, ἐς ὅσον ἀμέλει καὶ ἀπιστεῖσθαι. οὕτως ἅρα ὅτῳ ἂν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ φρόνημα ἐλευθέριόν τε καὶ γενναῖον ἐνῇ, τούτῳ δὲ οὐδὲν ὁτιοῦν κώλυμα γίγνεται, μὴ οὐχὶ εἶναι ἀρίστῳ. Zonaras (iii. p. 169): ἦν δὲ ὁ Ναρσῆς ἐκτομίας, ἄλλως μέντοι γενναῖός τε καὶ στρατηγικώτατος καὶ τοῖς κρατοῦσιν ὠκειωμένος.

[2] Malalas, p. 476; Cedrenus, vol. i. p. 647.

[3] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iv. 2, 6.

so devoted to the Virgin Mary that he would never commence an engagement until he had received from her a signal that the moment was auspicious.[1] Nor even from the military point of view was Narses unfitted to take the command against the Goths. He possessed considerable strategic ability, as was afterwards proved in the battles of Scheggia and Capua. Moreover, he had spent some months in Italy during the first campaign of Belisarius; he knew the country, therefore, had studied the Gothic methods of warfare, had established friendly relations with most of the Imperial generals, and had shown himself to be the one man capable of keeping them in some control.[2] Thus, for several reasons, there seemed to be ground for hope that the appointment of Narses would bring this ruinous war to a favourable conclusion.

The event justified the foresight of Justinian. Narses, with a large army, composed chiefly of barbarian mercenaries—among them were 2500 Lombards with 3000 attendants, 3000 mounted Heruls under Philemuth, 400 Gepids under Asbad, Huns commanded by Dagistheus, and Persians by Kobad—marched from Philippopolis to Salona, whence he followed the coast to the confines of the province of Venetia. Here he was threatened with opposition, both by the Franks, who detested the Lombards, and by a Gothic force under Teias stationed at Verona. However, by advancing along the seaboard, and using his fleet for transport across the mouths of the rivers which barred his course, Narses arrived without any mishap at Ravenna, where, having collected the remains of the Imperial troops, he made ready for the great battle which was to decide the fate of Italy.[3]

This battle took place in July, 552.[4] The exact site of the engagement has not been determined. Some locate it on the south of Scheggia, west of the Flaminian Way, a little to the north of Tadino; others place it near Sassoferrato. Narses

[1] Evagrius *Hist.* iv. 23. Paul. Diac. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 3: "Erat vir piissimus, in religione catholicus, in pauperes munificus, in recuperandis basilicis satis studiosus, vigiliis et orationibus in tantum studens, ut plus supplicationibus ad Deum profusis quam armis bellicis victoriam obtineret."

[2] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* ii. 13–22.

[3] *Ibid.* iv. 26.

[4] *Ibid.* iv. 29–32; Theophanes *A. M.* 6044. See Hodgkin *Italy and her Invaders* vol. iv. pp. 643–645, for a note on the site of the battle.

gained a preliminary advantage by occupying, with fifty picked soldiers, a hill which commanded the field. In the battle itself he relied chiefly on his wings, which closed in round the impetuous Goths, and threw them into inextricable confusion. The day was won. The Goths showed astonishing bravery, but fled at last, leaving six thousand of their number dead upon the field. Totila himself was mortally wounded by Asbad leader of the Gepids, and died some twelve miles off at Caprara. In the following month his jewelled hat and blood-stained robe were laid at the feet of Justinian.

This battle ended, practically, the Gothic war. Narses marched through Tuscany and entered Rome in state. The Goths, meanwhile, in their great despair, barbarously massacred three hundred youthful hostages (whom Totila had selected from the noblest Roman families and sent for security beyond the Po), as well as all the Romans of distinction who yet remained in Campania.[1] The fact that Gordianus and his family escaped this butchery may perhaps be regarded as a confirmation of my conjecture that he had already returned to Rome.

The last stand of the Goths was made in the early months of 553.[2] Under their new king, Teias, the remnant of Totila's army gave battle to Narses near Monte Lettere, on the banks of the river Sarno, which empties itself into the Bay of Naples. They fought with superb courage, but fate was against them. Teias was slain, and at length the surviving troops were compelled to surrender on condition that they should be permitted to leave Italy, carrying with them their families and movable property. On their side, they engaged never again to make war upon the Emperor in any part of his dominions. A thousand men, it is true, refused to accept these terms, and effected their escape to Pavia, which, with certain other towns, still held out. But one after the other these cities were reduced. Cumae and Lucca both endured a stubborn siege, but surrendered before the end of the year; Luna, Florence, and Pisa opened their gates on receiving the assurance that they should be kindly treated[3]; Verona and Brescia may have remained in Gothic hands for many years, but even these at last submitted. The final effort of the Goths, which resulted in the invasion of Italy by the

[1] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iv. 34. [2] *Ibid.* 35.

[3] Agathias *Hist.* i. 8, *sqq.*

Alamannic chiefs, Leutharis and Butelin, proved abortive. The great army of Franks and Alamanni, once 75,000 strong, wasted by fevers and routed by Narses in the battle of Capua, melted away over the Alps[1]; and in 554, for the second time during the reign of Justinian, Italy became a province of the Empire.

Thus ends the story of the Gothic dominion in Italy. During sixty years of enlightened rule the Gothic sovereigns had laboured to secure peace and prosperity for the land they governed. The arts and industries were encouraged; the old Roman institutions were maintained; strict justice was administered and religious toleration enforced; agriculture revived, wealth increased, and trade flourished. It was the aim of Theodoric to build up a Romano-Gothic civilization in an independent Italy, within which conquerors and conquered might live side by side in friendship and prosperity. He desired to blend the best elements in the Gothic and the Roman character, and so to produce a people vigorous with the hardness of the Goth and civilized with the culture of Rome. But these elements were uncongenial, and refused to coalesce. Theodoric was thwarted in his good intentions, partly by the Catholic Church, which steadfastly opposed any *rapprochement* between the orthodox and Arians,[2] and partly by the degenerate spirit of the Roman people, who were unable to rise to their opportunity, and who rewarded Theodoric's efforts for their welfare only with ingratitude and persistent hostility. Confronted with such obstacles, it is not surprising that Theodoric failed to realize his ideal. The doom of Italy had, in fact, gone forth. The Gothic dominion offered her a last chance of unity and independence, and when that chance was withdrawn, Italy parted asunder, and through thirteen centuries became the prey of multitudinous distracting forces. The history of ancient Rome closed with the death of Totila, and the history of mediaeval Italy began.

[1] Agathias *Hist.* ii. 1–9.

[2] The story in *Dial.* iv. 30, which relates that a hermit of Lipari beheld Theodoric hurled down the crater of a volcano by John the Pope and Symmachus the Patrician, illustrates the bitterness of clerical feeling against that worthy prince. Among the Catholics in France Theodoric had as evil a reputation as among the Italians (Greg. Tur. *Mirac.* i. 40). Contrast the panegyric of Theodoric in Procop. *Bell. Goth.* i. 1.

We may now take a glance at the Rome of 554—the city in which Gregory, now fourteen years of age, was commencing his public education.

(c) *Rome.*

The aspect of the "Golden City,"[1] in the days of Gregory, was desolate and melancholy in the extreme. On all sides—along the Via Sacra, in the Fora, throughout the Campus Martius—the eye was met by traces of ruin and decay; vast works of wealth and industry, injured by storm and fire, but unrepaired; magnificent basilicas with no one to do business therein; grand lines of columns surrounding temples long closed and abandoned; triumphal arches rising in the midst of *débris;* libraries, the contents of which had been destroyed; empty palaces, with flowers and ivy crowning their mouldering walls. The baths, "so magnificent as to resemble entire provinces,"[2] the artificial "stagna," the fountains once supplied by the aqueducts, were dry and waterless. The countless statues, which adorned the squares and public buildings, and gave to Rome a second population of bronze and marble,[3] were mostly mutilated or fallen from their pedestals. The theatres were crumbling, the stadia desolate; and the marble pavements, once pressed by the feet of throngs from every nation under heaven, were breaking up. The Rome of the Republic and of the Roman Emperors was slowly perishing. The city of which Augustus had boasted that he had left it marble—the city of which one so recent even as Cassiodorus could exclaim that the whole of it was one great miracle[4]—the city of parks and palaces, of cool arcades and gold-roofed temples, had become at the time when Gregory trod its streets little better than a cluster of dilapidated ruins. If Horace could have risen from his tomb to stroll once more along the Sacred Way, he would scarcely have recognized the scene of careless wanderings in the bright days of the early Empire.

Many causes had contributed to this result, and not the

[1] Prudentius *Apotheos.* 385: "aurea Roma."

[2] Amm. Marc. xvi. 10, § 14.

[3] Cassiod. *Var.* vii. 15.

[4] *Ibid.* vii. 15: "Nunc autem potest esse veridicum, si universa Roma dicatur esse miraculum."

least of them was war. Within a century and a half Rome had been sacked four times[1]; within less than twenty years it had been five times captured by force of arms.[2] It is true that neither Alaric nor Genseric, neither Ricimer nor Totila, seems to have inflicted wanton damage upon the structures of the city; at any rate, the first three were bent solely upon plunder, and abstained from injuring to any serious extent the edifices themselves. But although, if we except the unexecuted project of Totila, there was no deliberate attempt at demolition, the damage done to the Roman buildings by successive armies of pillagers must have been considerable. Fittings were torn away, statues were hacked about and mutilated, gilded tiles and beams, bronze doors and decorations, were roughly removed, and the monuments thus disfigured were left without repair until the natural process of decay completed their destruction.

A second cause was neglect. The buildings were shaken by earthquake or injured by fire and pillage, but no one restored them. The beautiful temples, which in past times served not only as places of worship, but also as public museums and art galleries, were closed, and no one crossed their thresholds. Even in the days of Jerome we read that the Capitol was filled with mire, and all the shrines of Rome defiled with dirt and cobwebs.[3] And this description, rhetorical and exaggerated in Jerome's time, was sadly accurate in the time of Gregory. According to a legend, which was believed to be true at the end of the sixth century, the Bishop of Canosa one day spoke with St. Benedict about the future of the Eternal City. The bishop was apprehensive of what Totila might do, and he said to Benedict, "The city doubtless will be destroyed by this king, so that it will never more be inhabited." But the saint replied with a famous prophecy, "Rome shall never be destroyed by the gentiles, but it shall be shaken by tempests, lightnings, and earthquakes, and shall decay of itself."[4]

A third cause of decay was the unpatriotic practice so common amongst the Romans of erecting new buildings with materials taken from the old. "It is well known"—so runs

[1] By Alaric in 410, by Genseric in 455, by Ricimer in 472, by Totila in 546.
[2] In 536, 546, 547, 549, and 552.
[3] Hieron. *Epp.* cvii.
[4] Greg. *Dial.* ii. 15.

the edict of Majorian—"that in several instances public buildings, in which all the ornament of the city consisted, have been destroyed with the criminal permission of the authorities, on the pretext that the materials were necessary for public works. The splendid structures of ancient buildings have been overthrown, and the Great has been everywhere destroyed in order to erect the Little. From this has arisen the abuse, that whoever has built a private house, has, through the favour of the magistrates, presumed to appropriate the necessary materials from public buildings; whereas all such buildings as contribute to the splendour of the city should have been restored and upheld by the loving reverence of the citizens."[1] Many of the Emperors enacted laws prohibiting this wholesale spoliation, and Theodoric, the Gothic king, made a final effort to protect the perishing monuments. But Emperors and Kings alike were unable to arrest the mischief. The first buildings to suffer such violence were the temples, closed since 394, and tenanted, according to popular superstition, by evil spirits. But the secular structures soon shared the same fate; and archaeologists inform us that they have discovered no building later than the fourth century which was erected originally with freshly quarried material. In the light of these facts it is somewhat curious to find Procopius belauding the Romans for their peculiar love of their city and their anxious care for the preservation of its historic monuments.[2] Unfortunately for the reputation of the citizens, the edicts of the Emperors and the discoveries of our excavators tell a different tale.

Gregory was a witness of the passing of Old Rome. He lived amid the relics of the past, in the great city on which was set the seal of unmistakable decay. Let us imagine him, for once, leaving his father's house and mounting the Via Sacra, most famous of all streets, on his way to attend a lecture on the Capitol or to listen to a Virgil recitation in the Library of

[1] Gregorovius *Rome in the Middle Ages* vol. i. p. 224.

[2] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iv. 22: *καίτοι ἀνθρώπων μάλιστα πάντων ὧν ἡμεῖς ἴσμεν φιλοπόλιδες Ῥωμαῖοι τυγχάνουσιν ὄντες, περιστέλλειν τε τὰ πάτρια πάντα καὶ διασώζεσθαι ἐν σπουδῇ ἔχουσιν, ὅπως δὴ μηδὲν ἀφανίζηται Ῥώμῃ τοῦ παλαιοῦ κόσμου. οἵ γε καὶ πολύν τινα βεβαρβαρωμένοι αἰῶνα τάς τε πόλεως διεσώσαντο οἰκοδομίας καὶ τῶν ἐγκαλλωπισμάτων τὰ πλεῖστα, ὅσα οἷόν τε ἦν, χρόνῳ τε τοσούτῳ τὸ μῆκος καὶ τῷ ἀτημελεῖσθαι δι' ἀρετὴν τῶν πεποιημένων ἀντέχει.* Procopius goes on to give a curious description of one ancient relic—the so-called ship of Aeneas.

Trajan. As he passes through the city, what kind of panorama would meet his view?

First, to the right of the Sacred Way, opposite the Colosseum, on the little hill called Velia, there still was standing, with porphyry columns and gilded tiles intact, Hadrian's lovely double temple dedicated to Venus and Rome—the temple which had cost the uncourtly architect his life. Beyond it, spanning the road at its highest point, rose the Arch of Titus, from which a slight descent, lined with fine buildings, conducted the traveller to the Roman Forum. The buildings on either side of the road were yet imposing. On the right, at the top, was the great brick-constructed Basilica of Constantine, with its noble vaulted ceiling and its three naves divided by gigantic pillars; next was the Church of SS. Cosmas and Damian; beyond, the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina, of which the marble frieze, with bas-reliefs of griffins, candelabra, and festoons, is considered a marvel of art; and, further still, one caught a glimpse of the red granite columns of the portico built by Theodosius on the site of the once splendid Basilica Aemilia. On the left of the Via Sacra, below the Arch of Titus, was, first, the Porticus Margaritaria, a handsome arcade with shops of jewellers, goldsmiths, and perfumers—shops, however, which had now for long been closed and empty. Lower down were the buildings of Vesta—the house of the Vestal Virgins, now transformed into citizens' dwellings and pierced with many doors and windows, and adjoining it the sanctuary of Vesta, closed and silent. The road ended in the Forum, the scene of many of the most stirring events in Roman history. It was an area of small extent, paved with slabs of travertine, crowded with statues and surrounded with venerable buildings. The heat in summer was stifling here, and in the old days the Romans sought for some alleviation by spreading out shady awnings, beneath which they were able to take their part, with comparative comfort, in the many varied phases of the Forum life—in the legal discussions, the criminal prosecutions, the religious ceremonies and processions, the military pageants, the public executions, and the political banquets. In Gregory's time the Forum was no longer the scene of brilliant spectacles or of important business transactions. It was still used, however, as a popular meeting-place, where the wiseacres of Rome foregathered to discuss the affairs of the city.

The buildings that surrounded the Forum were still in fair repair, though many of them were disused and permanently shut up. On the east side were two abandoned structures—the Temple of Castor and the retangular Temple of Julius, marking the spot where the body of the great Caesar had been cremated. Both these buildings, however, through long neglect, were falling into decay. On the south side of the Forum was the vast Basilica Julia, with nave and four aisles, the site of which in modern times recalls a chain of varied memories of Roman magistrates and the priests of S. Maria de Foro, of mediaeval rope-makers, of marmorarii, lime-burners, and the guardians of the Ospedale della Consolazione. On the north side, next to the Basilica Aemilia, was the small bronze Temple of Janus, yet containing the image of the god. Its brass gates, closed since Rome became Christianized, had been wrenched on their hinges in 537 by some half-pagan fanatics, and had never shut quite tightly since.[1] Beyond this temple stood the ancient Senate House, the elaborate decorations of which—the gilded coffers of the vaulted roof, the marble panelling of the walls, the bas-reliefs of the pediment and the bronze door—continued to be seen and admired long after Honorius the First had turned the hall into the Church of St. Hadrian.

At the west end of the Forum was a confused mass of splendid monuments—the Arch of Severus, with its sculptured episodes of Eastern wars; the white marble Temple of Concord, praised by Pliny; the elegant Temple of Vespasian, of which three columns are standing in the present day; the badly restored Temple of Saturn; and the huge Tabularium. And at the back of all, to the south, there rose in solemn majesty the Capitoline Hill. A century and a half ago the poet Claudian had described the scene which met the gaze of one standing on the Palatine and looking towards the historic shrine of Jupiter Capitolinus. He spoke of the crowd of temples blocking the sky, the highly wrought doors, the statues seemingly suspended in mid-air, the innumerable arches, the beaked columns commemorative of great naval victories—all alike glittering in the sunshine with brass and gold work, till the dazzled eye shrank before the splendour of the scene.[2] In these hundred and

[1] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* i. 25.

[2] Claudian. *De VI. Cons. Honor.* 42–52.

fifty years, however, the ravages of decay had been rapid and unchecked, and the view had lost somewhat of its magnificence. Yet even in the sixth century, the buildings of the Capitol, defaced and broken as they were, and robbed by enemies of their statues and golden tiles, must have seemed to Gregory, as to Cassiodorus, "surpassing all other works of human skill."[1]

North-east of the Forum of the Republic, between the Capitol and the Quirinal, on a site now covered by a network of insignificant and dirty streets, there stretched, in Gregory's time, the splendid series of the Imperial Fora, ending on the north with the superb Forum of Trajan. This quarter, with its fine open spaces, its spreading porticoes, and its majestic temples, has in modern times completely changed its aspect. Excepting a portion of Trajan's work, the Fora of the Emperors have entirely disappeared. Three Corinthian pillars of Luna marble, with their entablature, which once adorned the Temple of Mars Ultor in the Forum of Augustus; and the two "Colonnacce" of the Temple of Minerva in the Forum of Nerva, are the sole remains of a group of buildings which were once the most beautiful and magnificent in Rome. In Gregory's time, however, these piazzas were not encroached upon, and Papal builders had not yet begun to make havoc of the impressive edifices. The temples, indeed, were closed, and here, as everywhere, there was abundant evidence of decay and neglect, but in its general features the scene was the same as in the days of the Early Empire.

Of the entire series the Trajanic group of buildings was perhaps the finest. "The Forum of Trajan," says Cassiodorus,[2] "however often we see it, is always wonderful." To make room for it, Trajan had cut away a ridge which formerly linked the Capitoline Hill with the Quirinal, separating the Imperial Fora from the Campus Martius. The space thus obtained was occupied by the large open area of the Forum itself, by the bronze-roofed Basilica Ulpia, the Greek and Latin Libraries, and the Temple of Trajan. It was further beautified by a multitude of statues of famous men (among them those of Claudian and Sidonius Apollinaris), and by an equestrian

[1] Cassiod. *Var.* vii. 6: "Capitolia celsa conscendere, hoc est humana ingenia superata vidisse."

[2] *Ibid.* vii. 6.

effigy of "the best of princes" himself. Ammianus Marcellinus has left us an interesting account of a visit made to this "place impériale" by the Emperor Constantius in 357.[1] He says that when the Emperor reached the Forum, "the most exquisite structure under the canopy of heaven and admired even by the gods themselves," he fell into a stupor of admiration, and, realizing the impossibility of himself completing any work of like magnificence, he exclaimed despairingly, in allusion to the equestrian statue, that the horse which Trajan rode was all that he could imitate. Whereat Prince Hormisdas, who chanced to be at his side, replied, "But the horse, your Majesty, must have a stable worthy of him. Command, then, one to be erected as magnificent as this."

In Gregory's time there seems to have existed in Trajan's Forum a relief representing a woman supplicating the Emperor; and to this group a story had become attached, to the effect that on one occasion Trajan, when setting out to battle, had delayed in order to give audience to a widow who prayed for justice.[2] Gregory knew the story, and was touched by the goodness of the prince. After his death in 604 a legend grew up, apparently in the English Church, that the Pope "prayed" or "wept" so earnestly for the soul of the Emperor, that he procured its release from the infernal torments, though at the same time he was divinely warned never again to presume to pray for any who had died in paganism. This legend is accepted by Paul the Deacon, but is regarded with grave suspicion by John, and is unconditionally rejected by later Catholic theologians.[3]

[1] Amm. Marc. xvi. 10.

[2] Gregorovius says that "the legend doubtless arose from some relief then existing in the Forum, a province being perhaps represented as a woman supplicating the Emperor. Dio Cassius, 69. 6, relates the incident with the suppliant woman of Hadrian, with whom Trajan seems to have been afterwards confounded."

[3] Paul. Diac. *Vita* 27; Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 44. John endeavours to escape the theological difficulty by pointing out (1) that Gregory did not actually pray for Trajan, but only wept for him; and (2) that the Emperor's soul was not lifted to Paradise, but only released from fiery torment. Further, he throws all responsibility for the story on to the English Church: "Legitur etiam penes easdem Anglorum ecclesias." The reference is, of course, to the *S. Gallen Life* c. 29, where the legend first occurs. It is noticeable that the author of this Life, in his turn, asserts that the legend comes from Rome. His account is as follows: "Die quadam [Gregorius] transiens per forum Traianum,

The buildings of Trajan were intact in the sixth century. War, however, had wrought, in one respect, irreparable damage. The priceless treasures of Greek and Latin literature, once contained in the libraries, had perished. Some of the fine editions of the classics, inscribed on sheets of ivory, and enclosed in rich embroidered and jewelled cases, had been carried off as booty; the common rolls had been lost, or destroyed by fire, or left to rot in the cupboards until they were cleared away as rubbish. Only a few books, secreted by some careful librarian, can have survived of one of the richest collections that any city was ever fortunate enough to possess. But the Romans of Gregory's age had no longer thoughts for literature, and to Gregory himself the masterpieces of the pagan writers would have seemed but vanity.

It would be tedious to describe in detail the other great monuments of ancient Rome which yet adorned the diminished city of the sixth century. The buildings in the neighbourhood of the Roman Forum and the Imperial Squares were perhaps the most venerable and magnificent. Yet in the Campus Martius and other quarters were many others equally interesting, and equally touched by the universal decay. There was the Pantheon, with the colossal statues of Augustus and Agrippa under the portico, and the neglected effigies of departed Caesars in their shrines beneath the gilded dome. But the place was

quod ab eo opere mirifico constructum dicunt, illud considerans repperit opus tam elemosinarium eum fecisse paganum, ut Christiani plus quam pagani esse posse videretur. Fertur namque contra hostes exercitum ducens propere pugnaturus, unius ad eum voce viduae misericorditer mollitus, substetisse totius imperator orbis. Ait enim illa: 'Domine Traiane, hic sunt homines qui filium meum occiderunt, nolentes mihi rationem reddere.' Cui, 'Cum rediero,' inquit, 'dicito mihi, et faciam eos tibi rationem reddere.' At illa: 'Domine,' ait, 'si inde non venies, nemo me adiuvet.' Tunc iam concite reos, in eam fecit coram se in armis suis subaratam ei pecuniam componere quem debuerunt. Hoc igitur Sanctus inveniens Gregorius, id esse agnovit quod legimus; *Iudicate pupillo et defendite viduam ei, venite et arguite me dicit Dominus.* Unde per eum quem in se habuit Christum loquentem ad refrigerium animae eius quid implendo nesciebat, ingrediens ad sanctum Petrum solita direxit lacrymarum fluenta, usque dum promeruit sibi divinitus revelatum fuisse exauditum, atque ut nunquam de altero illud presumpsisset pagano." For this legend, see further; John of Salisbury *Polycrat.* v. 8: S. Thom. *Summa.* iii. suppl. 71, § 5: Dante *Purg.* x.; *Par.* xx.: Bellarmine *De Purgat.* ii. 8: Baronius *Annal.* ad an. 604. Consult also De Champagny *Les Antonins* vol. i. pp. 371-373, and the references there given.

believed to be haunted[1]; the great bronze doors were closed; and the silence within was broken only by the patter of the rain pouring through the opening in the cupola on to the marble floor, and by the monotonous plash against the walls of the rising waters of Tiber. There, again, was the Mausoleum of Augustus, described by Strabo,—a circular building of white marble supporting a leafy garden of cypresses and evergreens. But no gardener came any longer to keep the trees in order, and the bronze statue of the Emperor, amid a rank and tangled growth kept solitary ward. There too was the Poseidonion, with its exquisite bas-reliefs representing the thirty-six provinces of the Early Roman Empire. There were the Race-course of Flaminius; the Stadium of Domitian, much of which was still standing in the Middle Ages; the Theatres of Marcellus and Balbus; the huge Theatre of Pompey, which provoked the admiring exclamation of Cassiodorus, "How is it, O age, that thou dost not destroy, when thou hast shaken that which is so mighty?"[2]; the Baths of Nero and Alexander, and of Agrippa; the monster Thermae of Diocletian, the largest baths in Rome, the work of thousands of Christian prisoners. Everywhere the eye was met by the melancholy magnificence of great works sinking into unregarded ruin. The theatres were falling in pieces, the baths were dry and waterless, the temples were closed. In the open spaces of the city the weeds grew freely, the gardens and pleasure-grounds were choked with rubbish, and the grass was pushing through the broken pavements of the streets. On account of the destruction of the aqueducts,[3] and the consequent difficulty in procuring water, the higher and more salubrious quarters of the city were deserted; and the vast private palaces of the nobles—so huge that it was remarked of them, "A single house is a city"[4]—were empty and silent. The sumptuous shops, which had once been the pride of the luxury-loving Romans, were mostly closed. No libraries remained, save in a few churches. The "mighty nation

[1] Baeda *H. E.* ii. 4; Paul. Diac. *Hist. Lang.* iv. 36.

[2] Cassiod. *Var.* iv. 51.

[3] For an account of the aqueducts, see Hodgkin *Italy and her Invaders* vol. iv. chap. 6, and the references there given.

[4] Olympiodorus (ed. Bonn. p. 469): εἷς δόμος ἄστυ πέλει· πόλις ἄστεα μυρία κεῖθει.

of statues,"[1] which in prodigious numbers had once decorated the buildings and piazzas of Rome, and which even the Christian Prudentius had characterized as "the noblest ornaments of our fatherland," were, many of them, broken or removed, or lay neglected at the foot of their pedestals, with no one to restore them into place. The city, in short, was a city of death; and Gregory might well have anticipated Montaigne's remark, that "there is nothing left of Rome but its grave."

The appearance of the people was in keeping with the aspect of their city. There was no longer either wealth or talent left in Rome. The brilliant society so vigorously depicted by writers like Jerome and Ammianus Marcellinus, had vanished utterly. The Epicurean millionaires, the high-born matrons surrounded with troops of sycophants and gossips, the men of pleasure, the supple, scandal-purveying churchmen, the mercenary advocates, the light-hearted, pampered populace;—all these were seen no more. That self-indulgent, frivolous life had burnt quite out. Of the Romans of the sixth century, survivors of the Gothic War, all who were swayed by pleasure or ambition, all who cared for the splendour of the court or for the society of the learned, or for opportunities of gaining distinction and of making money, had taken their departure to the new Rome on the Bosphorus, or had joined the court of the Patrician at Ravenna. The very few who remained in Rome were for the most part little better than beggars,[2] living miserably in corners of the great ruinous mansions which they had no longer the means of keeping up, or huddled together in tenements in the lower quarters of the city, where they fell a prey to the malaria which was engendered from the swamps caused by the destruction of the aqueducts. The whole population, estimated in the time of Augustus at about a million, cannot in these days have exceeded forty thousand souls. And these were all that were left in a city which, besides innumerable public buildings, contained nearly eighteen hundred palaces for the wealthy

[1] Cassiod. *Var.* vii. 13: "populus copiosissimus statuarum."

[2] Pelagius I. *Ep.* 14 (Migne *P. L.* lxix. p. 408): "Tanta egestas et nuditas in civitate ista est, ut sine dolore et angustia cordis nostri homines, quos honesto loco natos idoneos noveramus, non possimus adspicere." Gregory, during his pontificate, often gave allowances from the treasury of the Church to persons of good family who were in want.

and more than forty-six thousand lodging-houses for those less well-to-do.

Everything in the place was stagnant. Civil life was hopelessly dislocated. Political activity there was none. The Senate indeed—"the flower of the human race," in Cassiodorus' courtly phrase[1]—still existed in name, but the only function assigned to it, in the Pragmatic Sanction of Justinian, was that of regulating, in conjunction with the Pope, the weights and measures used by tradesmen.[2] There was no commerce or manufacture to restore prosperity. Learning had departed in the train of wealth. Agriculture, which had revived under the rule of Theodoric, was utterly decayed. The Campagna, which once presented the appearance of "a great park, studded with villages, farms, lordly residences, temples, fountains, and tombs," was now a dangerous and pestilential wilderness, and nothing but the lines of broken aqueducts and the charred ruins of villas and country-houses bore witness to the life that once had flourished there.

Thus, then, in the middle of the sixth century, the Rome of the classical age seemed doomed to moulder away ingloriously, the sport of the elements, the prey of robbers, insulted by barbarians, and wronged by her own children. Yet within this city of fading splendour another Rome was growing up. "The clearest light of the universe" was not extinguished, as Jerome had once believed.[3] The Eternal City was by no means dead: it was only undergoing the agonies of transition. The city of the Caesars was in process of becoming the city of the Popes. Temples and palaces were fast disappearing, but churches were being built and adorned with ever-increasing magnificence. Emperor and court had vanished, but an ecclesiastical hierarchy had taken their place. The toga had been exchanged for the cowl, the sceptre for the crozier. And though Rome had long ceased to govern the world by force of arms, she was learning to claim dominion as the divinely appointed guardian and administrator of the Christian religion.[4] Thus on the site of the ancient

[1] Cassiod. *Var.* i. 13. [2] *Sanct. Pragm.* 19.

[3] Hieron. *ad Eustoch. Praef. in Comm. Ezech.*

[4] Greg. Tur. calls Rome "*urbs urbium et totius mundi caput*" (*H. F.* v. Prolog.). Cf. *S. Gallen Life* c. 28: "Romae quae urbium caput est orbisque domina."

classical city, and inheriting the ancient classical tradition, the mediaeval Christian Rome was gradually coming into being—the Rome of the Prince of the Apostles and the Martyrs, the Rome of churches, of monasteries, of pilgrim shrines, of the Bishops of the Lateran.

It will be advisable to notice briefly a few of the more important buildings of this new Rome.

Of the great patriarchial churches, the most venerable was the Basilica of Constantine, near the Asinarian Gate—"the mother and head of all the churches of the city and of the world"—originally dedicated to the Redeemer, but known since the sixth century as the Basilica of St. John Lateran. It was a comparatively small building, consisting merely of a nave and two aisles, but its decorations and ornaments were so splendid as to win for it the name of the "Golden Basilica." Close by, in the Domus Faustae, was the episcopal palace, where, from the time of Constantine to the migration to Avignon, the successors of St. Peter had their residence.

On the other side of the Tiber, in the Vatican region—a territory already filled with convents, hospitals, and churches—rose the Basilica of St. Peter.[1] This great church, with its spacious marble-cased atrium, its nave and four aisles, its ninety-two columns, its semicircular tribune glistening with mosaics, retained substantially its original form down to the pontificate of Julius the Second. It was built traditionally by

[1] Some details about St. Peter's are given in Greg. Tur. *Mirac.* i. 28. About the tomb he writes as follows: "Hoc sepulcrum sub altari collocatum valde rarum habetur. Sed qui orare desiderat, reseratis cancellis quibus locus ille ambitur, accedit super sepulcrum; et sic fenestella parvula patefacta, immiso introrsum capite, quae necessitas promit efflagitat. Nec moratur effectus, si petitionis tantum iusta proferatur oratio. Quod si beata auferre desiderat pignora, palliolum aliquod momentana pensatum facit intrinsecus, deinde vigilans ac ieiunans, devotissime deprecatur, ut devotioni suae virtus apostolica suffragetur. Mirum dictu! si fides hominis praevaluerit, a tumulo palliolum elevatum ita imbuitur divina virtute, ut multo amplius quam prius pensaverat ponderet; et tunc scit qui levaverit, cum eius gratia sumpsisse quod petiit. Multi enim et claves aureas ad reserandos cancellos beati sepulcri faciunt, qui ferentes pro benedictione priores accipiunt, quibus infirmitati tribulatorum medeantur." Gregory says also: "Extant hodie apud urbem Romanam duae in lapide fossulae, super quem beati apostoli, deflexo poplite, orationem contra ipsum Simonem Magum ad Dominum effuderunt. In quibus cum de pluviis lymphae collectae fuerint, a morbidis expetuntur, haustaeque mox sanitatem tribuunt."

Constantine, who, according to the Papal biographer, "erected a basilica over the body of the blessed Peter, which he enclosed in a bronze case."[1] The workmanship of the edifice was bad, and the building must have seemed mean when compared with those of a former age. The materials used were taken largely from other structures, the walls being a patchwork of fragments, and the bases and capitals of the pillars being dissimilar. Yet the site was hallowed by memories of the Christian martyrs tortured to death by Nero, and by the tradition of St. Peter's crucifixion. And, above all, the precious relic of the Apostle's body lying in its golden vault made the Basilica of the Vatican the centre of the religious life of Rome. The tomb of the Jewish fisherman was, as it were, the palladium of Roman greatness; it was the one spot where a Roman could still feel that his city had not entirely lost its claim upon the reverence of the world. Hither, for the festival on the 29th of June, came long trains of pilgrims from far-distant lands.[2] Hither the princes of the earth sent costly offerings to the chief of the Apostles. Here—to take but a few instances which the first half of the sixth century supplies—Theodoric, though an Arian and a Goth, "worshipped with the deep devotion of a Catholic,"[3] and presented at the altar two silver candlesticks seventy pounds in weight.[4] Here Clovis the Frank offered "a royal gift adorned with precious

[1] *Liber Pont. Vita Silvestri.*

[2] At this time vast crowds of pilgrims annually came to Rome: "the magnets which drew them were dead men's bones, their goal a grave, their reward a prayer before it." (Cf. Prudentius: "Innumeros cineres sanctorum Romula in urbe Vidimus.") Paulinus of Nola used to make an annual journey thither, as also did the solitary mentioned in Greg. *Dial.* iii. 17. Greg. Tur. *H. F.* ii. 5 has a curious story of a Gaulish bishop who went to Rome to pray for the overthrow of the Huns, "scilicet ut, adiunctis sibi apostolicae virtutis patrociniis, quae humiliter ad Dominum flagitabat, mereretur facilius obtinere." People usually came for the Festival of the Apostles (Greg. *Hom. in Ev.* xxxvii. § 9). Gregory encouraged such pilgrimages (*Epp.* viii. 22); but they were frequently productive of evil results. See the celebrated letter of Boniface to Cuthbert of Canterbury, A.D. 748 (Haddan and Stubbs *Councils* iii. 381). An epigram of Theodulf of Orleans is worth quoting—

> "Non tantum isse iuvat Romam bene vivere quantum
> Vel Romae, vel ubi vita agitur hominis.
> Non via, credo, pedum, sed morum ducit ad astra,
> Quis quid ubique gerit, spectat ab arce Deus."

[3] *Anonym. Vales*: "devotissimus ac si catholicus."

[4] *Lib. Pont. Vita Hormisdae.*

stones,"[1] as the firstfruits of his conversion, and the earnest of the connexion which was to be in after-times between his own successors and those of the Apostle. Justin, too, sent from Constantinople vessels of gold and silver ornamented with jewels, embroidered cloths, and volumes of the Gospels in costly bindings set with precious stones[2]; and similar presents were made by Justinian shortly before the outbreak of the Gothic War.[3] Lastly, the veteran Belisarius, from his share of the spoils, dedicated here a golden cross inlaid with gems, on which his victories were enumerated; and two large candlesticks of silver gilt, which in the ninth century still stood "before the body of St. Peter."[4] The Vatican Basilica, thus enriched, gradually came to represent the power of the Roman Church and the majesty of the Roman city. And when at last Honorius the First stripped Hadrian's finest temple of its metal tiles to adorn St. Peter's roof,[5] the act was but the logical conclusion of a sequence of events which had converted Rome from a city of Emperors and soldiers and jurists into a city of pilgrims and monks and priests.

Scarcely less rich, and certainly more beautiful than St. Peter's, was the Basilica of St. Paul—the magnificent church completed by Honorius on the Ostian Way, where once a chapel marked the traditional site of the Apostle's martyrdom. It had been superbly decorated by Galla Placidia, the sister of Honorius, under the guidance of Pope Leo, and at this time was, perhaps, the most splendid and impressive church in Rome. The eighty magnificent pillars, the marble casing of the walls, the gilded ceiling, and the great arch resplendent with mosaics, must have presented a truly dazzling spectacle for the throngs of pilgrims who came to pay their vows at the tomb of the Doctor of the Gentiles.

"By Tiber's current where the turf on the left bank is grazed,
And Ostia's road guardeth the hallowed ground,
Our prince's favour there to Paul a stately fane upraised,
And pranked with golden plates the circuit round.

"With branching foil of metal blaze on high the burnished beams,
The aisles are ruddy as the morning ray;
Of pillars white 'neath gilded vault a fourfold order gleams,
And arches dyed as green as leas in May."[6]

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[1] *Lib. Pont. Vita Hormisdae.* [2] *Ibid. Vita Hormisdae; Vita Joan. I.*
[3] *Ibid. Vita Joan. II.* [4] *Ibid. Vita Vigilii.* [5] *Ibid. Vita Honorii.*
[6] Prudentius *Peristeph.* xii. 45–54. (Translated by F. St. John Thackeray.)

The Liberian Basilica on the Esquiline, and that of St. Lawrence outside the walls on the road to Tivoli, complete the number of the five ancient patriarchial churches of Rome. Of these the former, S. Maria Maggiore, is interesting for the remarkable mosaics executed by Pope Sixtus the Third, and also for the fact that it was probably the first Roman church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The title conferred on it is supposed to commemorate the condemnation of Nestorius, and the triumph of the orthodox affirmation that Mary was indeed the Mother of God. The Church of St. Lawrence, on the site of the martyr's grave, is alleged to have been founded by Constantine, and was rebuilt by Gregory's predecessor, Pope Pelagius the Second,[1] who also is believed to have brought from Constantinople relics of St. Stephen the Protomartyr, and to have caused them to be placed in St. Lawrence's coffin.

The five basilicas above mentioned had for long been held in peculiar and universal honour. They were not assigned to any cardinals, but were presided over by the Bishop of Rome himself, while the whole body of Christians dispersed throughout the world constituted their community. By the time of Gregory, moreover, along with these five, two other basilicas were regarded with special veneration—that of S. Sebastiano on the Appian Way, and that of S. Croce in Gerusalemme. These, "the seven churches of Rome," became, from the sixth century, the goal of pilgrimages, and the central points of Catholic devotion.

Besides these seven great churches, Rome, at this time, possessed about twenty-eight tituli,[2] or parish churches, in which the sacraments were regularly administered, and which were each under the charge of a cardinal-presbyter. Some of these were of great antiquity, and, for the interest of their associations, equalled the more celebrated basilicas. Such was S. Pudenziana on the Esquiline Hill, traditionally the oldest church in Rome, and built where the house of Pudens had once given harbourage

[1] *Lib. Pont. Vita Pelagii II.*

[2] The original number was twenty-five (*Lib. Pont. Vita Marcelli*). In 499 there were twenty-eight, of which a list is given in *Synodus Rom.* i. ann. 499, "de tollendo ambitu in comitiis pontificiis." (Labbe *Conc.* iv. p. 1315.) In the acts of the synod held by Gregory in 594, five of the tituli of 499 are omitted (viz. SS. Aemiliana, Crescentiana, Nicomedes, Matthaeus, Caius), and three new ones appear (viz. S. Balbina, SS. Marcellinus and Petrus, and Quatuor Coronati).

to St. Peter; such also were S. Clemente, S. Prisca on the Aventine, and S. Prassede. In addition to these twenty-eight tituli, there were in Rome a multitude of other buildings connected with the service of religion — churches, chapels, shrines and oratories, hospitals, guest-houses and convents, the number of which was steadily and incessantly on the increase.

Of the Christian places of worship in this period two characteristics require a passing notice.

First, their architecture was basilican, and their distinguishing quality was severe simplicity. On their exteriors little care was bestowed—in striking contrast to the temples of antiquity. Their interiors exhibit the same general features—a nave with two aisles divided by stately lines of columns, a semicircular apse, and (when there happened to be a transept) an arch in front of the apse. The vacant spaces on arch and apse and walls were adorned with mosaics, austere and solemn in conception, but most brilliant in effect. The introduction of such decorations was not indeed universally acceptable, but it was becoming increasingly common, and not a few eminent churchmen wrote or spoke in their defence. Paulinus, for instance, upheld the practice on the ground that pictorial representations supplied food for thought to the people in the intervals of the services[1]; and Gregory himself, as we shall see hereafter, supported the custom for reasons somewhat similar.[2] An atrium, with a fountain in the midst, enclosed by a colonnade, usually formed the approach to these churches, and not unfrequently almost hid them from view.

Secondly, the Roman churches were constructed to a great extent from old materials. We have already remarked this in the case of the Vatican Basilica; and the Vatican Basilica was no exception to the general rule. Thus the pavement of the Basilica of St. Paul was patched with more than nine hundred miscellaneous inscriptions, and its columns were the spoil of ancient buildings. The Church of St. Peter ad Vincula, again, was adorned with columns of Greek marble, taken most probably from the Baths of Trajan or of Titus; the Church of the Holy Apostles was rebuilt by Pelagius with stones and columns from the Baths of Constantine; the pillars of St. Sabina seem once

[1] Paulin. *Poem.* xxvii. 542, *sqq.*

[2] See below, Vol. II. pp. 74–76.

to have belonged to the Temple of Diana. In some few instances ancient public buildings had been appropriated in their entirety for Christian worship. The Templum Sacrae Urbis, for instance, had been turned into the Church of SS. Cosmas and Damian, and the Basilica of Junius Bassus had been renamed by Pope Simplicius after St. Andrew. The actual shrines of paganism, however, were not in Gregory's day turned to this account. They remained barred and empty, the home of myriads of foul crawling things, and the haunt (so it was thought) of evil spirits. However, on May 13, 609, Boniface the Fourth dedicated the Pantheon to the Virgin Mary and All the Martyrs, and placed in a porphyry basin under the high altar no less than twenty-eight cart-loads of bones from the Catacombs.[1] And this was the commencement of a general appropriation of pagan shrines. The Temple of Janus was dedicated to St. Dionysius; that of Antoninus and Faustina to St. Lawrence; that of Saturn to the Saviour; and in the vestibule of the Temple of Venus and Rome a chapel was consecrated to St. Peter. Thus did Christianity triumph eventually over the ancient gods; but in the sixth century, as I have said, this wholesale appropriation had not yet begun.

Such, then, was the Rome of Gregory's childhood—a city old and dying, yet at the same time newly born to a fresh and vigorous life, a city of ruined temples and of gorgeous churches, a city from which all that ministered to worldly glory seemed to have passed away, yet to which the greater crown of spiritual dominion was on the point of being awarded. Gregory's Rome was not the Rome of the Republic or the Rome of the Empire; it was the Rome of the Church, of the Popes, of the Middle Ages.

I will conclude this chapter with a short account of the situation and power of the Papacy at this time.

(*d*) *The Papacy.*

On the 13th of August, 554, the Emperor Justinian promulgated a document known as the Pragmatic Sanction, in which he formally declared Italy to be reunited to his Empire, confirmed

[1] *Lib. Pont. Vita Bonifacii IV.*; Paul. Diac. *Hist. Lang.* iv. 36. It is said that from the magnificent dedication services dates the origin of the Festival of All Saints.

the acts of the Ostrogothic sovereigns from Theodoric to Theodahad, and regulated the affairs of the province in a series of legislative enactments. Of this edict we need here notice only two sections, which are important for the light they cast on the position of the Pope. The 19th section, "De Mensuris et Ponderibus," runs thus: "In order that no occasion of fraud or injury to the provinces may arise, we decree that produce be furnished and money received according to those weights and measures which Our Piety hath by these presents entrusted to the keeping of the most blessed Pope and the most honourable Senate." Here, then, we observe that a matter of purely secular business is committed to the Bishop of Rome, who, in this regard, is placed on an administrative equality with the Roman Senate. But the 12th section of the edict, dealing with the appointment of the civil governors of the Italian provinces, is even more startling. It is thus worded: "We order, moreover, that fit and proper persons, able to administer the local government, be chosen as governors of the provinces by the bishops and chief persons of each province from the inhabitants of the province itself." By this law churchmen were given a certain influence and control in the Italian provincial government; hence, of course, the Pope, who as Metropolitan and Patriarch had unbounded influence with the provincial bishops, obtained indirectly a share in the secular government, not only of his own city, but also of all the cities in which his provincial bishops resided. The importance of such an enactment for the extension of the power of the Papacy is too obvious to require enlarging on.

The Gothic War, then, in many respects, tended to the advantage of the Pope. In the first place, as I have shown, his legal powers were extended. And in the second place, his authority was strengthened by the very circumstances of his environment. In a city beggared alike of rank and wealth and learning, but devoted to religion, he found himself supreme. The Emperor was far away at Constantinople, the Byzantine Governor held his court in Ravenna, the Senate was a pithless shadow. The few subordinate officials who occupied the Palatine were not of such standing as seriously to interfere with him. The Pope was the man of highest rank in Rome, and he represented the only Roman institution which yet retained vitality,

the only one which in an age of universal corruption and decay continued fresh and vigorous. To the Church men looked for maintenance and guidance, and the Pope was head of the Church. Hence his authority, though still vague and undefined, was none the less real and acknowledged; and as the Emperor's hold on Italy grew laxer, and the wealth and power of the Church increased, the claims of the successor of St. Peter became more daring and far-reaching, until at last all independent secular jurisdiction was completely set aside.

Nevertheless, before the time of Gregory's pontificate, the Papal power was very far from being consolidated. On the contrary, the prestige of the Bishops of Rome had fallen low, and, at the first, the Byzantine conquest seemed to have brought them nothing but mortification and misfortune. A glance at the history of the time will make this evident.

During the period of the Gothic monarchy, the Popes, on the whole, were considerately treated, and permitted to exercise a very wide discretion in the management of ecclesiastical affairs. But in spite of the concessions made to them by the Arian government, they were dissatisfied. It is pretty clear that Felix, Boniface, and John the Second, while keeping on good terms with the Goths, yet secretly hankered after the rule of the orthodox Emperor. Pope Agapetus also seems to have shared this sentiment. On his visit to Constantinople, this prelate commenced, indeed, by abusing Justinian as "a new Diocletian," but he succeeded in persuading him to degrade from his see the Monophysite Patriarch, Anthimus, and to appoint the orthodox Mennas in his room[1]; and this act of compliance on the part of the Emperor so pleased Agapetus that he too began to cherish an ideal of reunion between the orthodox Roman Church and the orthodox Roman Emperor. The realization of this ideal, however, was left to the succeeding Pope, Silverius, who in 536 actually invited Belisarius to Rome, and persuaded the Romans to deliver up their city to the Catholic Emperor's general.[2]

But the Popes soon had good reason to regret their Gothic

[1] *Lib. Pont. Vita Agapeti;* Liberatus *Breviarium* 21; Zonaras, vol. iii. pp. 166, 167. Dante (*Paradiso* cant. vi. 13, *sqq.*) represents Justinian as originally holding Monophysite opinions, and converted by Agapetus.

[2] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* i. 14.

masters. Silverius, in his hostility to the Arians, had overlooked the theological caprices of Justinian and the Monophysite leanings of the all-powerful Theodora.[1] The Empress, who "clung to her Monophysite creed as if it had been some new form of sensual gratification," strongly resented the deposition of Anthimus, and was resolved by any means to restore him to his dignities. In 537, accordingly, she wrote abruptly to Silverius: "Delay not to come to us, or, at least, restore Anthimus to his see." Silverius groaned aloud when he read the letter, and exclaimed, "Now I know that this affair will bring about my death." Nevertheless, putting his trust in God and St. Peter, he replied: "Most Noble Empress, never will I do what you ask, or recall a heretic who has been condemned in his wickedness."

It chanced that at this time there resided at Constantinople, as Papal representative, a certain Vigilius, an ambitious and unscrupulous man of aristocratic parentage and sympathies. In 532 this person had been nominated by Pope Boniface the Second as his own successor in the Holy See; but this flagrant infringement of the elective rights of the clergy and people had provoked such a tumult that Boniface was compelled to burn the obnoxious decree, acknowledging it to be contrary to law.[2] The failure of this attempt naturally deprived Vigilius of any chance he might have had of being elected by fair means to the coveted office. But he did not yet abandon all hope. His influence was sufficient to procure him the post of "apocrisiarius" or Papal ambassador, at Constantinople; and here he settled down to watch the course of events and await his opportunity for striking a blow for the great ecclesiastical prize. The quarrel between Silverius and the Empress gave him the opening he desired.

Theodora and Vigilius soon came to an agreement. Theodora, for her part, promised the Nuncio a considerable sum of money and the bishopric of Rome; while on his side Vigilius undertook virtually to annul the Council of Chalcedon by

[1] For the story of Silverius, see *Lib. Pont. Vita Silverii;* Liberatus *Breviar.* 22; Procop. *Bell. Goth.* i. 25; *Hist. Arc.* i. These authors do not always agree in points of detail, but they leave us in no uncertainty as to the general outline of the story of Silverius.

[2] *Lib. Pont. Vita Bonifacii II.*

formally recognizing as his brethren in the faith the Monophysite Anthimus, Theodosius patriarch of Alexandria, and Severus of Antioch. These preliminaries completed, Vigilius set out for Italy, bearing written orders to Belisarius to seek out a pretext for degrading Silverius, or at least to send him speedily to Constantinople.

This commission was little to the mind of a general who, with all his faults, was a man of honour and integrity. He is said to have exclaimed, on reading the letter, "I will do her bidding, but he who gains by the death of Silverius shall answer for it to the Lord Jesus Christ." Yet Belisarius had not the courage to disobey, and his wife Antonina, who was under obligation to the Empress, spurred him on. A ridiculous charge of treason was accordingly trumped up against Silverius, and a letter was manufactured in which he was represented as offering to open the Asinarian Gate to the Goths, and to deliver up the city. Even now Belisarius made an effort to save the unhappy Pope. He sent for him to his palace on the Pincian, and earnestly advised him to submit to Theodora and restore Anthimus. Silverius refused to entertain the proposal; but he took the precaution, when the interview was ended, of quitting the Lateran, and taking sanctuary in the Church of St. Sabina on the Aventine. Hence, after an interval, Belisarius summoned him a second time, and urged him once again to accede to the Imperial demand. This audience, like the former, was without result; no violence, however, was offered to the person of the Pope, who was permitted to return in safety to his asylum. At last there came a third summons, and Silverius rightly judged that the end was at hand. Surrounded by his weeping clergy and friends, he went in mournful procession to the Pincian Palace. "At the first and second veils" his attendants were stopped, and he "passed on alone, and was seen no more." The Pope was taken straight to the general's cabinet, where he found Antonina reclining on a couch, and Belisarius sitting at her feet. As soon as he entered, the shameless woman cried out, "What have we and the Romans done to you, Pope Silverius, that you should betray us into the hands of the Goths?" While she was speaking, John, Subdeacon of the First Region, tore the pallium from the Bishop's shoulders. He was then hustled into an adjoining room, and compelled to change his vestments for a

monk's frock; and meanwhile Sixtus, subdeacon of the Sixth Region, curtly announced to the waiting clergy, "Pope Silverius is deposed, and has become a monk." The priests fled. The abandoned Pontiff was handed over to Vigilius, who sent him into exile at Patara in Lycia. In the same month, by the command of Belisarius, the farce of an election was gone through, and Vigilius was consecrated Bishop of Rome.

Curiously enough, Justinian himself seems to have been ignorant of these transactions. At any rate, when the Bishop of Patara, sympathizing with Silverius, made representations in his favour at Constantinople, the Emperor instantly gave orders that the exiled Pope should be brought to trial at Rome: if innocent of the charges brought against him, he was to be reinstated in his dignities; if guilty, he was to be allowed his choice of any bishopric other than that of Rome. Silverius, however, benefited little by this favour. When he arrived in Rome he was once more delivered over to his rival, who banished him to the Island of Palmaria, and shortly afterwards procured his death by violence or starvation. Such was the end of Silverius.

It was now the turn of Vigilius to drink of the cup of humiliation. After his consecration he had declared his adhesion to the Four General Councils, his acceptance of the Tome of Leo, and his approval of the anathema of Mennas against the Monophysites. Of course, he dared not in the beginning fulfil the terms of his compact with Theodora; and as time went on he found that the difficulties in the way of his doing so increased rather than diminished. At length, when the demands of the Empress became pressing, he wrote a secret letter to his "brethren" Anthimus, Theodosius, and Severus, in which he declared that he held and always had held a belief identical with theirs, but pledged them to keep the matter secret for the present.[1] With this letter he enclosed a confession of faith which, according to Liberatus, was heretical and subversive of the Tome of Leo. These documents satisfied the Empress for a time. When, however, she found that the Pope showed no signs of taking further steps, she grew angry and impatient, and wrote to him "to fulfil the promise you made of your own free will concerning our father Anthimus, and recall him to his office." But the Vigilius who made the engagement was

[1] Liberatus *Breviar.* 22.

a very different man from the Vigilius who was called upon to execute it. As Pope he was no longer free. It was utterly impossible for him to annul the acts of his predecessors, or tamper with the inveterate traditions of the Apostolic See. Not the meanest of all his suffragans would for one moment have tolerated such an outrage. So Vigilius, having to choose between the fury of the Empress and the revolt of all the West, accepted the former as the lesser evil, and forwarded the following reply to his former confederate: "Far be it from me to do this thing. Aforetime I spoke wrongly and foolishly; but now I will in no wise consent to recall a man that is a heretic and under ban of anathema. Although I be an unworthy vicar of the blessed Apostle Peter, yet what can be said against my holy predecessors, Agapetus and Silverius, who condemned him?" [1]

Theodora was not a woman one could play with. She received the defiance in August, 545, and she instantly despatched an officer to Rome with these instructions: "If you find the Pope in the Basilica of St. Peter, spare him; if in the Lateran, or the palace, or any church, instantly put him on board ship and bring him hither to us. And if you do not do thus, by Him who liveth for ever, I will have you flayed alive." It seems that Vigilius was unpopular with the Romans, who accused him, among other things, of killing a notary by a blow on the face, and of causing his own nephew to be beaten to death. Theodora's emissary, therefore, did not apprehend any serious opposition to the arrest. On the 22nd of November, 545, Vigilius went in state from the Lateran to the Church of S. Caecilia in Trastevere, to assist at the patronal festival and to give the communion to the people. While thus engaged, he was addressed by the Byzantine officer, who requested him to accompany him to the ship. The Pope obeyed. The people, stunned by the suddenness of the affair, followed in large crowds, beseeching the Bishop's prayers; and when Vigilius had offered a short petition, they all cried, "Amen." The ship then weighed anchor. But as the Romans watched it glide away, they were suddenly seized with a strange frenzy, and catching up any missile that came to hand, they hurled it after their departing Bishop, shrieking, "Hunger go with thee! mortality

[1] *Lib. Pont. Vita Vigilii.*

go with thee! thou hast done evil to the Romans: may evil find thee wherever thou goest!" With these ill-omened cries ringing in his ears, the fifty-ninth bishop of Rome was escorted to Sicily, where he seems to have remained in partial confinement for over a year.[1]

The affair of Anthimus was now dropped, or at least was overshadowed by the controversy of the Three Chapters. It is, indeed, possible that Vigilius's removal to Sicily was occasioned as much by his refusal to subscribe to Justinian's edict of 543, as by the animus of Theodora. And if so, his exile in Sicily was intended at once as a punishment and as a means of persuading him to withdraw his opposition. Since, however, exile was not sufficient to break his spirit, Vigilius was at length summoned to the Imperial city itself. The history of this miserable controversy of the Three Chapters will be related in the sequel; here we need only remark the loss of Papal prestige which was its immediate result. The Pope, indeed, presented to the world a sorry spectacle. The West was at once indignant and amazed when it beheld its Patriarch and foremost Bishop, now clinging to the breaking pillars of an altar, while rude soldiers, dragging at hair and beard and legs, sought to tear him from his asylum; now sweating and trembling in his prison bed-chamber, listening in terror to the calls of the sentries, and dreading each moment lest they should break in and assassinate him; now furtively squeezing his portly frame through a small hole in the palace wall when he fled for safety to the Church of St. Euphemia.[2] Such humiliations were little calculated to enhance the dignity of the successor of St. Peter. Still less conducive to respect was the irresolution exhibited by the Pope himself, whose tergiversations, recantations, and final abject submission, made his name a byword for his own and all succeeding generations. It was a distinct relief to the Roman clergy when, on June 7, 555, Vigilius expired in Sicily, thus making a vacancy for a man of stronger calibre.[3]

[1] For another version of the story of Vigilius's departure from Rome, see Facundus *Pro defens. Trium Capitul.* iv. 3.

[2] Vigilii *Encyclica* (Migne *P. L.* lxix. pp. 53–59).

[3] It is significant of the hostile feeling in Rome, that Vigilius was not buried, as was usual, in St. Peter's, but "ad sanctum Marcellum, via Salaria" (*Lib. Pont. Vita Vigilii*).

Vigilius was succeeded by Pelagius, the brave Archdeacon who had played a prominent part in the Gothic War. He had accompanied the late Pope to Constantinople, where he succeeded in so conciliating the favour of Justinian, that the latter had even proposed to supersede Vigilius and elevate Pelagius to his place.[1] This project, indeed, had not been carried out, but when news came of Vigilius's death, Justinian at once made known his wish that Pelagius should be elected as his successor.

At Rome, however, Pelagius was received with grave suspicion. It was reported that he had bought the bishopric; and a rumour —quite unfounded, it seems—had got about that he had even been accessory to the death of his predecessor. So universally was this story believed, that it was impossible to find three bishops willing to consecrate him, and the ceremony was at last performed by the bishops of Perugia and Florence, assisted by Andrew, a presbyter of Ostia. At once the majority of the clergy, monks, and nobles withdrew from his communion.

In this crisis it was necessary for the Pope to take immediate steps to clear himself of the charges, and to regain, if possible, the attachment of his flock. He accordingly consulted with Narses, and the plan which they agreed upon was eminently characteristic of the times. Already, partly owing to the Christian regard for the solemnity of an oath, partly to the increasing difficulty of conducting judicial investigations, partly perhaps to the example of Teutonic nations, it was becoming more and more usual to allow accused persons, particularly bishops, to purge themselves on oath at the shrine of some saint.[2] Now, the Roman saint, Pancratius, as Gregory of Tours informs us, enjoyed a high reputation as an avenger of perjury.[3]

[1] *Lib. Pont. Vita Vigilii.*

[2] See below, p. 465, note.

[3] Greg. Tur. *De Glor. Mart.* 39: "Est etiam haud procul ab huius urbis muro et Pancratius martyr, valde in periuris ultor. Ad cuius sepulcrum, si cuiusquam mens insana iuramentum immane proferre voluerit, prius quam sepulcrum eius adeat, hoc est antequam usque ad cancellos qui sub arcu habentur, ubi clericorum psallentium stare mos est, accedat, statim aut arripitur a daemone aut cadens in pavimento amittit spiritum. Ex hoc enim quisque fidem cuiuscunque rei ab alio voluerit elicere, ut verum cognoscat, non aliter nisi ad huius basilicam destinat. Nam ferunt plerosque iuxta basilicas apostolorum sive aliorum martyrum commanentes, non alibi pro hac necessitate nisi templum expetere beati Pancratii, ut eius severitatis censura publice discernente aut veritatem audientes credant aut pro fallacia iudicium

To the Church of St. Pancras, therefore, on the Janiculum just beyond the walls, the Pope and the Patrician repaired, and from there they walked in solemn procession, chanting litanies, to the Basilica of St. Peter. Pelagius passed up the nave and entered the ambo, where, taking the Gospels in his hand and laying a cross upon his head, he swore before all the people that he had done nothing to occasion or to hasten the death of his predecessor. Then he denounced in fiery terms all those connected with the Church, from the doorkeeper to the bishop, who attempted to gain office by bribes, and he called on all his hearers to assist him to stamp out utterly the crime of simony.[1]

This ceremony of purgation (which Gregory may have witnessed) appeased the Romans, and for the rest of his pontificate the authority of Pelagius was established in the city. But beyond the walls the case was different. The controversy on the Three Chapters and the acceptance of the decrees of the Fifth Council by Vigilius and Pelagius, had occasioned a formidable schism. In Sicily and Southern Italy, indeed, the authority of the Pope was maintained. The bishops were not required formally to accept the obnoxious decrees: the fact that they continued in communion with the bishop of Rome was taken as sufficient proof of their orthodoxy. In other parts of Italy, however, many bishops revolted, and even went to the length of striking the name of Pelagius out of the diptychs. The bishops of Tuscia sent him a formal remonstrance; the metropolitans of Milan and Aquileia renounced his communion; even in remote Gaul it was rumoured that Pelagius had abandoned the faith of the Council of Chalcedon, and King Childebert applied to him for an explicit statement of his belief. To all these criticisms and attacks Pelagius replied with dignity and vigour. He emphatically proclaimed his assent to the decrees of the Four General Councils and to the Tome of Leo, anathematizing all who dissented from them. He did not require any bishop to accept explicitly the decrees of the Fifth Council, but he dwelt with emphasis on the sin and

martyris beati experiantur." In this basilica Gregory the Great preached a sermon: *Hom. in Ev.* 27. (For punishment of perjury, cf. also Greg. Tur. *H. F.* viii. 16 (St. Martin), 40; *Mirac.* i. 20, 58, 103; ii. 19, 39; *Glor. Confess.* 29, 93, 94; *De Mir. S. Martini*, i. 31.)

[1] *Lib. Pont. Vita Pelagii I.*

danger of schism. He warned bishops that by rejecting his communion they were severing themselves from the Church of Christ, and he cordially invited all who still felt scruples to come to Rome and discuss the matter with him personally.[1]

Besides these arguments, Pelagius endeavoured to employ another less convincing. Narses the Governor was, as I have said, a man of strong religious feelings, and to him the Pope appealed to crush out the evil by forcible means. "Do not be deterred," he wrote, "by the silly objection that the Church is persecuting. . . . No man is a persecutor unless he constrains people to do what is wrong. He who punishes evil deeds or prevents their commission is not a persecutor, but a friend. . . . That schism is an evil, and that schismatics should be put down by the secular arm, we learn both from Holy Scripture and the Fathers. But whoever is separated from the Apostolic See is undoubtedly in schism. . . . Do not hesitate, therefore, to repress such persons by your authority as governor and judge. . . . There are a thousand examples and a thousand decrees which clearly prove that those who cause division in the Holy Church should be punished by the officers of the State, not only with exile, but also with confiscation of property and severe imprisonment."[2] Whether Narses ever took steps in accordance with the Pope's wishes, we do not know. It is certain, however, that the schism continued in Northern Italy, creating a regrettable division of strength at a time when the closest union was absolutely necessary for the welfare of the country.

Pelagius died in the year 560, and John the Third was elected in his stead. But at this point we will leave for a time the consideration of the Papacy. The strength and the weakness of its position at this period have been pointed out. Its strength lay in the increase of its legal jurisdiction, and the removal of the secular government to so great a distance from Rome. Its weakness arose from the Italian schism, and Justinian's love of interfering even in matters purely ecclesiastical. The causes of weakness, however, were soon to be lessened or removed, while the elements of strength were destined to be multiplied. Thus the prospects of the Papacy were hopeful. For the Popes, as for Rome itself, a new age was about to begin.

[1] Pelagii I. *Epp.* 5, 6, 9, 15 (Migne *P. L.* lxix.).

[2] *Ibid.* 2 (Migne, lxix. 394).

CHAPTER III

GREGORY'S EDUCATION

GREGORY'S father, Gordianus, was a member of a class which, in the fifth century at least, was accustomed to pride itself on its culture scarcely less than on its aristocratic origin. The tone of good society, when Gordianus was a boy, was distinctly literary. The nobles of the period modelled themselves according to the patterns set by Symmachus and Sidonius; affected cultured tastes, scribbled verses, composed elaborate letters, were devoted to the classics, and cherished a fastidious literary sense. By the middle of the sixth century, this lettered society had well-nigh vanished in Italy, and perhaps its extinction was not entirely to be regretted. But those who had been educated after the old traditions doubtless retained a tender recollection of the interests of their youth, and set a high value on a literary training. It may have been some such sentiment as this which prompted Gordianus to expend peculiar pains upon the education of his son. At any rate, we know that he procured for Gregory the best training to be had in the arts most studied at this time; and it was, in no slight degree, to this foresight on his father's part that Gregory owed his subsequent success in life. As Chrysostom says, a good education is the best legacy that a parent can bequeath to a son.

The general course of Gregory's studies may be briefly outlined.

As soon as he was of an age to learn, the boy would have been handed over to a "grammatistes," or preparatory teacher (*litterarum primus informator*), from whom he would receive an elementary training in reading, writing, and cultivating the memory by learning off passages of Virgil or Holy Scripture.[1]

[1] Particularly the Psalms. Gregory of Tours (*De Mirac. S. Martini* i. 7)

After a few years spent on the rudiments, he would enter on a course of higher education, and begin to attend the lectures of the professors.

Rome was once the seat of a distinguished University, supported (at least in Imperial times) by the State. Vespasian made a liberal provision for the teachers of the capital, and Hadrian and the Antonines were forward in helping on the cause of humanism; Alexander Severus endowed professorships of rhetoric, founded exhibitions for poor scholars, and erected class-rooms; Constantine relieved professors from public burdens, decreeing also heavy punishments against any who should offer outrage to their persons; and Julian, while excluding Christians from the chairs of grammar and rhetoric, proved himself in other respects an enlightened patron of education. So again, in accordance with an edict of Theodosius and Valentinian, there were established at Rome ten grammarians and three rhetors for Latin, ten grammarians and five rhetors for Greek, one professor of dialectic, and two of law. At the close of the fifth century, indeed, the University of Rome was no longer so flourishing as it had once been, yet Sidonius still alludes to it as the seat of law and the abode of learning; and we learn from Ennodius that in his time young men from the provinces continued to visit it in search of a liberal education. Theodoric certainly showed his enlightenment by extending his protection to the schools; and during the regency of his daughter, Amalasuentha, handsome salaries were granted to the professors of grammar, rhetoric, and law, and Cassiodorus could proudly declare that "whereas other districts furnish wine, balsams, and aromatic herbs, Rome dispenses the gift of eloquence, to which it is inexpressibly sweet to listen."[1] This same veteran statesman consistently used his political power for the promotion of public education and intellectual studies. He even attempted to induce Pope Agapetus to found at Rome

speaks of a boy sent to school, who "omnem psalmorum seriem memoriae recordavit" (cf. Greg. Tur. *Vit. Patr.* 20, § 2). Of Nicetius of Lyons Gregory says, "Illud omnino studuit, ut omnes pueros qui in domo eius nascebantur, ut primum vagitum infantiae relinquentes loqui coepissent, statim litteras doceret ac psalmis imbueret: scilicet ut ingressui tale iungeretur psallentium, ut tam antiphonis quam meditationibus diversis, ut devotio flagitabat animi, posset implere" (Greg. Tur. *Vit. Patr.* 8, § 2).

[1] Cassiod. *Var.* x. 7.

a great theological school, similar to those of Alexandria and Nisibis.[1] But the outbreak of the Gothic War cut short all plans of university extension, and in the stormy years that followed, the Roman University was brought to the verge of ruin. The State ceased to make the usual grants. The more distinguished teachers transferred themselves to Constantinople or Berytus, or retired into private life. Their pupils left their books to learn more practical lessons in the school of war. Lectures ceased, and the class-rooms were closed.

With the settlement, however, the necessities of education began once more to make themselves felt. The University was reopened, and Justinian assigned salaries to professors of grammar, rhetoric, medicine, and jurisprudence.[2] But it is unlikely that the doctors of the first rank returned to their lecture-halls. The University had lost prestige. Culture was no longer fashionable. The men of wealth and refinement had perished or migrated, and the last admirer of classic literature had shut himself up in a monastery. Nor were the necessary funds forthcoming; for it is more than doubtful whether the salaries guaranteed by Justinian were ever paid, while the Church, which had the means of endowing learning, lacked the will to do so. Further, the Gothic War almost certainly involved the destruction of the libraries. It is just possible, though unlikely, that the Palatine Library still survived; but the Libraries of Trajan and most of those belonging to private owners without doubt had perished. It is true that in the Lateran and elsewhere new collections were being made. These, however, were purely ecclesiastical, and also, as we learn from Gregory's letters, still very defective. Thus it appears that, at the time of Gregory's schooling, the Roman University had fallen on evil fortunes. In the science and practice of medicine it was still pre-eminent. It was also one of the three schools authorized by Justinian to teach the science of law. Yet even legal knowledge declined in Rome soon after the promulgation of Justinian's legislation, and in other respects also the Roman University was far surpassed by those which could offer greater attractions to teachers of ability.

[1] Cassiod. *De Inst. Div. Litt.* Praef.

[2] *Sanct. Pragm.* 22.

When these facts are taken into consideration, it can scarcely be maintained that Gregory received a first-rate education. He had, however, the best that could be got at the time, and by comparing some passages in the "Lives" with a contemporary treatise of Cassiodorus entitled, *De Artibus ac Disciplinis Liberalium Litterarum*, we are able to arrive at a very fair idea of the training to which he was subjected.

Paul the Deacon tells us that in the arts of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, Gregory was well versed from boyhood, so that, although these studies were still flourishing in Rome, he was second to none in his skill in them.[1] And a similar statement is found in Gregory of Tours.[2] Both writers thus impute to Gregory a remarkable proficiency in the arts at that period most in vogue.

Of these arts, grammar—called by Isidore "the source and basis of liberal culture"—was not the least important. Much more, of course, was then included in this term than modern usage would imply. As defined by Cassiodorus, grammar meant such a study of the best poets and orators as would enable the student to write both poetry and prose with elegance and correctness.[3] It was, in fact, the study of

[1] Paul. Diac. *Vita* 2.

[2] Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* x. 1.

[3] Cassiod. *De Artibus* 1: "Grammatica vero est peritia pulchre loquendi ex poetis illustribus, oratoribusque collecta. Officium eius est sine vitio dictionem prosalem metricamque componere. Finis vero elimatae locutionis vel scripturae, inculpabili placere peritia." The text-book for grammar, in our sense of the word, was Donatus. To him students are referred by Cassiodorus and Martianus Capella. Gregory alludes to his rules (*Epp.* v. 53*a*, § 5). It appears from Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* x. 31, § 19, that in Gaul Martianus Capella was considered the great authority for teaching the seven liberal arts. "Quod si te sacerdos Dei, quicunque es, Martianus noster septem disciplinis erudiit, id est, si te in grammaticis docuit legere, in dialecticis altercationum propositiones advertere, in rhetoricis genera metrorum agnoscere, in geometricis terrarum linearumque mensuras colligere, in astrologicis cursus siderum contemplari, in arithmeticis numerorum partes colligere, in harmoniis sonorum modulationes suavium accentuum carminibus concrepare; si in his omnibus ita fueris exercitatus, ut tibi stylus noster sit rusticus, nec sic quoque deprecor ut avellas quae scripsi." Soon, however, Capella's treatise began to be regarded with suspicion by the orthodox. "It contained a remarkable anticipation of the Copernican theory in a statement that Mercury and Venus revolved round the sun; it asserted the existence of the antipodes; and finally it referred to the Triune God of Christianity in the same category with the gods of paganism. It was from these pages that Virgilius, the Irish bishop of

belles-lettres. The grammarians lectured on ancient authors, interpreted their meaning, commented on beauties of language and style, pointed out archaisms, furnished derivations, and dictated elaborate and learned notes upon the subject-matter. Their teaching combined grammatical analysis with attempts at literary appreciation. In its earlier stages it "was not above that of a low form in one of our grammar schools"; in its more ambitious efforts "it would, in a very unmethodical and perhaps superficial way, correspond in some degree to the liberal studies of our universities." A course of this kind must have been of advantage to Gregory in three ways. In the first place, he would be taught to read correctly, with proper attention to the accent and expression. Secondly, he would be instructed in the art of composition. It is true that the standard of excellence was not a high one. The poetry of the period particularly—that, for instance, of Arator or Venantius Fortunatus—was extremely decadent; its strange jumble of ideas and words, its bizarre misrepresentations of Christian thoughts by pagan images, its strained antiquarianism, frigid elaboration, and ridiculous conceits are significant of the utter degeneration of literary taste. Nor was the prose much better. The canons of style were hopelessly debased, and the ideals of teachers and critics were false and misleading. It is therefore, perhaps, a fortunate thing that Gregory failed in this respect to catch the spirit of the schools. He took little interest in the art of composition, made no effort to adorn or elaborate his style, cared not particularly even for the elementary rules of grammar.[1] The Latinity of the *Dialogues* and *Morals* however, though certainly not excellent, is yet on the whole respectable, and its grammatical simplicity contrasts favourably, not only with the barbarism of a Gregory of Tours, but also with the pedantry and polish of a Cassiodorus or a Columban. Thirdly, by his studies in grammar, Gregory would be made acquainted with some of the masterpieces of classical literature. The authors most studied in the fourth and fifth centuries were Virgil, Horace, Terence, Statius, and Claudian among the poets;

Salzburg, derived his theory of the antipodes, by the maintenance of which he drew down upon himself the enmity of St. Boniface and the anathema of Pope Zacharias."

[1] Greg. *Epp.* v. 53*a*, § 5.

and Sallust, Pliny, and Cicero of the writers in prose. The same authorities were doubtless read in Gregory's time. But it must be confessed that the extant works of Gregory exhibit little or no trace of any study of the classics. Whatever knowledge of ancient literature he had once possessed, the hard-worked Bishop had obviously forgotten.

After grammar came the study of rhetoric—"the art of speaking well on civil questions." [1] Probably Cassiodorus's treatise on this subject may be taken to represent the text-books then used in the Roman schools. It is based upon Cicero and Quintilian, and is of moderate length, being not much more than a statement of the chief rhetorical forms with explanations of technical terms, so that to be of much service it would require to be supplemented by good oral instruction. The rhetorical teaching of this period was in part theoretical—instruction concerning the divisions of a discourse, rhythm, varieties of style and the like—and in part practical. The pupils were exercised in declamation on prescribed subjects, being taught to debate, to argue, to deliver panegyric or invective, to condense a chain of ideas into a flowing period. Of these exercises the extant declamations of Ennodius may stand as typical examples.[2] They are of two kinds. Some are mere displays of rhetorical skill on purely imaginary subjects—such, *e.g.*, as "The words of Thetis as she gazed on the corpse of Achilles"; "of Menelaus as he looked on the burning of Troy"; "of Dido watching the departure of Aeneas"; "of Juno when she saw that Antaeus was equal in strength to Hercules." Others are set speeches supposed to be addressed to a public assembly or to judges. Among such orations are the following: "Against an ambassador who betrayed his country to the enemy"; "Against a law enacting that priests and vestal virgins shall be dismissed in safety from a captured city"; "Against a man who placed a statue of Minerva in a brothel"; "Against a father who refused to

[1] Cassiod. *De Art.* 2: "Ars autem rhetorica est, sicut magistri tradunt saecularium litterarum, bene dicendi scientia in civilibus quaestionibus . . . Oratoris autem officium est apposite dicere ad persuadendum. Finis, persuadere dictione, quatenus rerum et personarum conditio videtur admittere in civilibus quaestionibus."

[2] See the *Dictiones* of Ennodius (Migne *P. L.* lxiii.).

ransom his son from pirates, but afterwards called upon him for maintenance." Absurd and unreal as were the theses thus debated, these school exercises were none the less extremely useful to those who were preparing for a public life. They cultivated and trained the oratorical powers, and taught the art of manipulating ideas and words with telling effect. And it must be remembered that in Rome eloquence was the essential condition of success in public life. Statesmen and churchmen were expected to be able to speak well. Even the Emperors found it incumbent on them to study oratory, or, if they themselves lacked the gift of eloquence, at least to retain in their service professional rhetoricians to compose their speeches. Still more was it necessary for a preacher to be fluent and convincing, for otherwise he would never be tolerated by his critical Roman audience.[1] It is not surprising, therefore, to learn that such celebrated preachers as Ambrose and Augustine started life as brilliant rhetoricians, and we may conjecture that the foundation of Gregory's great success as preacher was laid in the training he received in youth in the rhetorician's class-room.

Dialectic in the sixth century was but little studied.[2] Sufficient indication of this is found in the fact that whereas the Gothic Government endowed chairs of grammar, rhetoric, and law, and Justinian established teachers of grammar, rhetoric, law, and medicine, neither Goth nor Roman thought it necessary to make provision for a professor of dialectic. And doubtless the utility of the science would not be obvious to politicians and practical persons. Nevertheless, though the study of dialectic had declined, it was not entirely given up, and Cassiodorus devotes to this branch of learning the most elaborate of all his essays.[3] The manual—if so it may be called—is based upon

[1] Augustine expressly draws attention to the value of a knowledge of rhetoric for a preacher (*De Doctr. Chr.* iv. 3).

[2] A dislike of dialectic is noticeable in the Church from early times. Irenaeus complains of those who oppose the faith with Aristotelian "minutiloquium," and Jerome speaks disdainfully of the "tendiculae dialectorum" and "Aristotelis spinata." "The two Gregorys, Basil, Ambrose, and Cyril protest with one voice against the dialectics of their opponents; and the sum of their declarations is briefly expressed by a writer of the fourth century (Epiphanius), who calls Aristotle 'the Bishop of the Arians'" (Newman *Arians* p. 30).

[3] Cassiod. *De Art.* 3.

Boethius, and, through Boethius, on Aristotle. Expounded by a judicious teacher, it would convey to pupils a very fair idea of ancient logic.

John the Deacon says that Gregory was "arte philosophus"[1]; but this phrase can scarcely mean very much. That Gregory had any knowledge of metaphysical philosophy is extremely unlikely.[2] Jerome says that in his time hardly any one read Aristotle, and few had heard so much as the name of Plato. Throughout the fifth century (though here and there we come across a student of Greek philosophy) the interest in the subject was steadily declining; and when, in 529, Justinian closed the schools of Athens, and the last philosophers fled away to seek an ideal republic in Persia,[3] metaphysical speculation altogether ceased, and all the philosophy thereafter known to the West was that contained in the works of Cicero, Boethius, and Martianus Capella. But though it is certain that Gregory was no metaphysician, yet there is another sense in which he might have been correctly described as a philosopher. In later life he was undoubtedly versed in ethics, and his grasp of the principles of moral philosophy have even won for him the appellation of "the Christian Seneca." It is possible, of course, that in his school-days Gregory heard lectures on Marcus Aurelius and Seneca,[4] and was initiated, perhaps, into some of the doctrines of the Nicomachean Ethics.[5] But the manner in which he treats his problems in the *Morals* is not academic, and his conclusions seem to be the result of independent thought. I conceive, therefore, that Gregory's "philosophy" was taught him by a long and various experience of mankind. As a study, it is improbable that it formed a part of his university curriculum.

Besides grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, Cassiodorus deals with the so-called mathematical sciences—arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. But his treatises on all these

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 1.

[2] He occasionally refers to philosophers; *e.g. Epp.* iii. 65; cf. *Mor.* xxxiii. 19.

[3] Agathias *Hist.* ii. 30, 31. The same author gives an interesting account of a philosopher named Uranius, who served as a standing joke at Constantinople, until he too went to Persia (ii. 29, 32).

[4] Gregory quotes Seneca in *Epp.* i. 33.

[5] See Greg. *Mor.* ii. 28, 29.

subjects put together occupy less space than the essay on rhetoric, and are scarcely more than half as long as the dissertation on dialectic. They contain, in fact, little beside brief explanations of some technical terms, and pupils who might desire to go deeper are referred for guidance to certain standard works—in arithmetic, to Boethius's translation of Nicomachus; in music, to several Greek and Latin authors; in geometry, to Boethius's translation of Euclid; in astronomy, to Ptolemaeus.[1] To what extent Gregory studied these subjects is, of course, a matter of pure conjecture. Elementary arithmetic he must have learnt at an early age, but there is no evidence that he possessed any knowledge of its higher branches, "the science of abstract number."[2] Of astronomy and geometry he seems to have been equally ignorant.[3] For music, however, he had a natural aptitude, and we have evidence that he devoted to this study much of his time and attention.

Of science, in the narrower sense of the term, Gregory knew nothing; and, indeed, there was little to know. The scientific knowledge of the period is fairly represented in the works of Cassiodorus, and of Isidore a little later. It is a curious medley of serious arguments and mere fancies, of quotations from pagan authors and the Bible, of strange etymologies used as authorities for supposed facts, of deductions from observed facts and from figurative expressions of Scripture misunderstood, of old mythological stories and moral and spiritual reflections. Amid this collection of ideas we find much that is interesting now, much that was doubtless valuable then, but also much that is fantastic, and not a little that is ludicrous. The following passage, taken from the *De Natura Rerum* of Isidore, may serve to illustrate the manner in which scientific subjects were treated about this

[1] See Cassiod. *De Art.* 4–7.

[2] Cassiod. *De Art.* 3 (*ad fin.*): "Mathematica . . . scientia est quae abstractam considerat quantitatem." "Arithmetica est disciplina quantitatis numerabilis secundum se." "Geometria est disciplina magnitudinis immobilis et formarum."

[3] Neither in Gregory of Tours nor in Venantius Fortunatus do we meet with any man celebrated for his knowledge of astronomy or geometry. Gregory of Rome says nothing of these sciences, though he more than once attacks the astrologers (*Mor.* xxxiii. 19; *Hom. in Ev.* 10, § 5). Cf. John of Salisbury's statement respecting Gregory's expulsion of the mathematici: "Gregorius . . . mathesin iussit ab aula recedere" (*Polycrat.* ii. 26).

time. In respect of the tides of the sea, Isidore says, "Some persons say that there are in the depths of ocean certain passages for the winds, as it were the nostrils of the world. According as the air is alternately sent out or drawn back along these passages, it causes the sea to rise or fall. Some, however, hold that the ocean rises with the increase of the moon, and is drawn back again by certain aërial forces emanating like breath from the moon itself. Others say that the sun draws up water from the ocean for its flames, and then diffuses it among the stars to temper their fires. Thus when the sun draws up the water it makes high tide in the ocean. But whether the waters are raised by the blowing of winds, or whether they rise with the course of the moon, or fall by the influence of the sun, is known to God alone, who has made the world, and who alone understands its meaning. The ocean is incomparable in size, untraversable in width. Which Clement, the disciple of the Apostle, has endeavoured to express when he says, 'No one can cross the ocean or reach the worlds which are beyond it.' But the philosophers say that beyond the ocean there is no land, and that the sea, like the land, is held together by a thick atmosphere of clouds. . . . But why the sea does not become larger, and why, with such supplies of water from the rivers, it does not rise in height, the Bishop Clement says is because salt water naturally consumes the fresh water that comes into it, and thus the saltness of the sea exhausts the supplies of water it receives, however great they may be. Besides, there is what the winds carry off, what the vapour and the sun absorb. We see pools and many hollows dried up in a very short time by the winds and the sunshine. But Solomon says that *unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again,* which must be understood of the sea, that through certain hidden passages of the deep the waters flow back and return to their sources, and then as before flow again in their rivers."[1]

Finally, it is likely that Gregory attended lectures on jurisprudence. Rome ranked with Berytus and Constantinople as one of the great legal universities, and it is probable that the professors of jurisprudence were superior in ability and eminence to the professors of the other faculties. The education of a boy like Gregory, the son of a public man and himself destined for

[1] Isidor. *De Nat. Rer.* 40, 41.

public life, would certainly include a course of legal studies. And for such studies he proved himself pre-eminently adapted. The clearness with which, in his later correspondence,[1] he is accustomed to handle complicated concerns, and his entire familiarity with questions of law, show that his early training was not thrown away.

Such was the general scheme of Gregory's public education. But it must not be forgotten that the strongest influences brought to bear upon his youthful mind probably lay outside the schools, in the religious atmosphere of his home. Gregory was the child of pious parents, and from his earliest years his thoughts were turned into religious channels. As a contemporary records, he was "devoted to God from his youth up."[2] Even when a boy, he acquired habits of piety which distinguished him from others of his age. He loved to meditate on the Scriptures, and to listen attentively to the conversation of his elders, whose words of wisdom he retained in a memory singularly tenacious.[3] And possibly it was the recollection of these bygone conferences overheard in his father's house that made Gregory in after-life so solicitous regarding the surroundings and attendants of the young. "For in truth," we find him writing, "the words of those who bring up children will be as milk if they be good, but as deadly poison if they be evil."[4]

We hear no more of Gregory for many years. For the moment, therefore, we take leave of him—a grave boy, wise beyond his age, a dreamer full of fervent aspirations and religious enthusiasm, a student of wisdom glad to sit humbly at the feet of older and riper men, a University scholar without a touch of pedantry, and withal a youth whose character was shaping in noble lines. Such was Gregory in 554. When we meet him next he will be a boy no longer.

[1] See, *e.g.*, Greg. *Epp.* xiii. 47, 49, 50.
[2] Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* x. 1.
[3] Paul. Diac. *Vita* 2; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 3.
[4] Greg. *Epp.* vii. 23.

CHAPTER IV

THE COMING OF THE LOMBARDS

For sixteen years after the death of Totila, Justinian governed Italy with little opposition. Then from the Julian Alps the "unutterable" Lombards poured down upon the country, and the unhappy provincials were once again exposed to all the horrors of invasion and of conquest.

The Lombards were the last of the Teutonic nations who settled in the western part of the Roman Empire. A rude race, "savage with more than ordinary German fierceness," few indeed in numbers, but of martial, independent temper, these barbarians were the inheritors of the Gothic monarchy, and founded in Italy a kingdom which endured for two hundred years. From the sixth century to the eighth, from Alboin to Desiderius, the Lombards ruled in the home of the Latin race, and they have left behind a still-enduring memorial of themselves in the style of one of the fairest of the Italian provinces, as well as in the laws and names and customs of the country. Yet the Lombards failed to establish a permanent ascendency or to effect a unification of Italy. They never obtained any real hold on the land or on its people. Hence, as the successors of Theodoric were driven out by Justinian, so the successors of Alboin were compelled to submit to Charles the Great. The second Teutonic kingdom had more stamina than the first. Its strength was greater, its effects are even now to be seen. But it was unequal to the task that was set before it, and therefore, after a prolonged struggle for existence, it was broken up by an external force, and unregretted passed away.

The early history of the Lombards is exceedingly obscure. Respecting their ethnological description, learned authorities differ,

some maintaining them to be of Low-German, others of High-German origin. On the whole, perhaps, it seems more probable that they were a Low-German tribe, whose original habitat was somewhere on the southern coast of the Swedish peninsula; that they migrated thence, about the second or first century B.C., to the territory on the left bank of the Elbe, near the mouth; from which region again they afterwards extended or removed to the parts of Holstein or Mecklenburg on the right bank, before they finally quitted the Lower Elbe for the region of the Middle Danube.[1] According to their historian, Paul the Deacon, the original name of the tribe was Winnili,[2] and it was not until they came to the region of Scoringa (to be identified, perhaps, with the tract of territory on the left of the Elbe's mouth) that they received the more familiar appellation. The old saga which relates how they came by the new name, is repeated with delight by the Christian deacon. The story runs that the Vandal tribe, who were the terror of the Lower Elbe, marched to subdue the Winnili, and on the eve of the battle both sides prayed to the gods for victory. The Vandals prayed to Odin, who answered, "Whichever tribe I look first upon at sunrise, to that will I give the victory." The Winnili prayed to Freia, Odin's wife, who recommended that at dawn the warriors and their wives should stand before Odin's eastern window, and that the women should arrange their hair around their faces to look like beards. Freia's advice was followed; and when at sunrise Odin looked forth from his window, he beheld the Winnili warriors and the women with their hair about their faces. Then said he to Freia, "Who are those long-beards?" (*longibarbi*). And Freia replied, "Thou hast given them a name, so now also give them the victory." Thus by Odin's help the Winnili vanquished the Vandals, and ever afterwards they bore the name of Langobardi. The clerical historian thinks it necessary to apologize for the heathenish recital. "This" writes he, "is a laughter-moving, futile story. For victory is not attributed to human power, but is rather accorded from heaven."[3] Yet he nevertheless maintains the

[1] For a summary of the principal theories respecting the early homes of the Lombards, see Hodgkin *Italy and her Invaders* v. pp. 141–146.

[2] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* i. 1.

[3] *Ibid.* i. 8.

correctness of his derivation. "It is certain that the Winnili received the name of Langobardi from the length of their beards, untouched by the razor. For in their tongue 'lang' signifies 'long,' and 'bart' 'beard.'" [1] So Paul. In recent times other derivations have been suggested. One would connect the name with the old High-German "bart" signifying "an axe," and explain "Langobardi" as meaning "men of long axes"; another makes "Langobardi" equivalent to "men who dwell on the Lange Börde," the long flat meadows of the Elbe. But, though either of these alternatives may be correct, no argument has hitherto been adduced sufficiently weighty to make it necessary to abandon the old derivation of Paul—the earliest, and perhaps, all things considered, the best of the three.

When history first took cognizance of the Lombards, they were dwelling near the mouth of the Elbe, in more or less intimate relation with two powerful Suevic tribes, the Hermunduri and Senones, whose settlements were higher up the river. Velleius Paterculus notes the extraordinary ferocity of the tribesmen; he asserts, however, that they were subdued by the Emperor Tiberius.[2] The historian Tacitus, in the *Germania*, refers to them as follows: "The scanty number of the Lombards is an honour to the people; for, though surrounded by a host of most powerful tribes, they maintain their existence, not by servile submission, but by daring the perils of war." [3] The same author relates that the Lombards joined the Cheruscan confederacy, when in 17 A.D. the Cherusci came into conflict with the Marcomanni; and that thirty years later they rendered substantial aid to Italicus, nephew of the great Cheruscan leader Arminius, in his struggles to maintain his sovereignty over his wild countrymen.[4] These short notices give us little information. Yet from these and the folk-tales of Paul is gleaned all that we know about the Lombards during the period of their sojourn at the mouth of the Elbe.

When we next hear of the people, the scene has changed. During the reign of Marcus Aurelius, about the year 165, we read that six thousand Lombards and Obii crossed the Danube into

[1] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* i. 9; cf. Isidorus *Etymol.* ix. 226.
[2] Vell. Paterc. *Hist.* ii. 106.
[3] Tac. *Germ.* 40.
[4] Tac. *Ann.* ii. 45, 46; xi. 17.

Pannonia, where they were utterly routed by the cavalry officer Vindex. In consequence of this defeat the barbarians sent an embassy to Aelius Bassus, Governor of Pannonia, and made peace, after which they once more retreated over the frontier.[1] Thus in the second half of the second century we find the Lombards in the region of the Middle Danube, in the neighbourhood of Pannonia. How they got thither is unknown. Our documents supply a list of place-names—Golanda, Anthaib, Banthaib, Burgundaib[2]—as to the application of which, however, there is interminable disputing among German *savans*. But whatever were the stages of the journey from the Elbe, in the year 165 or thereabouts, the Lombards are discovered upon the Danube, in the near vicinity of the territories of the Empire.

After this there is a great blank in the history. For more than three hundred years we have no reliable information about the Lombards. They had not yet emerged from the northern darkness into the clear light of Roman civilization, and of their dim wanderings and strugglings amid the chaotic mass of vagrant Teutonic barbarism it is scarcely profitable to speculate. It is asserted by Paul[3]—and there is no reason to doubt his statement—that, in the latter half of the fifth century, they settled for a time in Rugiland, on the northern bank of the Danube; possibly in the hope of making good their footing in the opposite province of Noricum. But this sojourn in Rugiland cannot have been of long duration, for in the first decade of the sixth century we find them established in a region called Feld, beyond the Danube, on the western plains of Hungary.[4] And here they begin to play a more prominent part in the drama of European history.

On the eastern shore of the Danube, to the south of the Feld where the Lombards had their settlements, there dwelt one great division of the powerful tribe of the Heruli. This nation, which had also come originally from the Baltic, is described by Procopius as faithless, shameless, and covetous—"the vilest of mankind."[5] They were heathen; and, almost up to Procopius's time, had practised peculiarly atrocious rites of human sacrifice. They had been accustomed also to murder

[1] Petrus Patricius, 6. [2] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* i. 13.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 19. [4] *Ibid.* i. 20. [5] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* ii. 14.

their sick and aged, and to compel widows to immolate themselves at their husbands' tombs. At the beginning of the sixth century, however, the Heruli were the most powerful tribe in that part of the country, and had reduced all their neighbours, including the Lombards (who had now become Christian) to the position of tributaries. But some time between the years 506 and 511, during the reign of the Emperor Anastasius, a war broke out between the Heruli and the Lombards, as a result of which the power of the former was for ever broken, and the attention of the Roman world was drawn upon the Lombard people. Respecting the occasion of this conflict, our historians give us two distinct accounts.[1] According to Procopius, it was provoked by the Heruli themselves, who, having subdued their barbarian neighbours and concluded a peace with the Empire, and finding the consequent inaction tedious, forced their king Rodulf to declare war upon the Lombards, without having any excuse other than their longing to enjoy once more the excitement of a fight. Paul, however, throws all the blame upon the Lombards, and he tells the following story. The brother of the Herulian Rodulf had paid a state visit to the Lombard king Tato, with the object of concluding an alliance. When his business was over, the prince set out on his homeward journey, and passed on his way the house of Rumetruda, the daughter of the king. Here he was invited to dismount and receive a cup of wine from the hand of the princess. The Herulian accepted the invitation, and stopped at the palace. Unfortunately, he was a little man, and when the daughter of the tall Lombards saw him, she could not conceal her contempt. But the taunts of Rumetruda were promptly answered with a stinging insult which covered her with confusion. Mortified and furious, the princess determined on revenge, and, dissembling her anger, she mollified her guest with soft words and pressed him to stay to dinner. When the hour arrived, the Herulian was ushered with all ceremony into the banqueting-hall, and placed in a chair before a window, which was covered, as though to do him honour, with a valuable curtain. About half-way through the entertainment Rumetruda turned to her butler, and said in a clear voice, "Misce!—mix the wine!" and at this preconcerted signal armed retainers, stationed

[1] Compare Procop. *Bell. Goth.* ii. 14 and Paul. *Hist. Lang.* i. 20.

behind the curtain, drove their lances into the back of the unsuspecting chieftain, killing him forthwith. It was this treacherous murder—according to Lombard tradition—which caused King Rodulf to break off his alliance with the Lombards and march to war.

Whether we give credence to either, or neither, or both of these accounts—for with some slight modification they can easily be harmonized—it is certain that about 506 the two tribes met in battle on the Feld. Procopius says that when they got into position the sky above the Lombards was black with massed clouds, while over the Heruli was clear sunshine—an evil omen. The Heruli, however, took no heed of this, but, confident in their numbers, joined issue, disdaining even to use armour to protect their naked bodies. King Rodulf, certain of the victory, did not take the trouble to enter the battle, but sat quietly at a table in his camp, playing some game. He had sent a man up a tree close by, to give him tidings of the fight: threatening, however, that if he reported that the Heruli fled, he should lose his head. Now and then the king glanced up from his play to ask how the battle was going, but the scout dared answer only that the warriors were fighting splendidly. Little by little, however, the Heruli gave way, and at last they broke into headlong rout. Then cried the scout, "Alas, wretched Herulia! surely thou art chastised by the wrath of heaven!" Playing King Rodulf called out in consternation, "Is it possible that my Heruli are fleeing?" And the watchman answered, "Thou, O king, hast said the word—not I." The victory of the Lombards was indeed complete. The flying army, in mad panic, came to a field of flax, and in their terror mistook the waving blue for rippling water. They plunged in as if to swim, and were butchered defencelessly. The remnant that survived abandoned their dwellings, and, after drifting about for some years, despised and demoralized, finally joined the Gepid confederacy. Meanwhile the Lombards entered upon their heritage. Their victory had brought them to the notice of the Roman world as a tribe to be seriously reckoned with. From this time onwards they have a place in history.

The power of the Lombards steadily increased. Waccho, the successor of King Tato, strengthened himself by alliances with several chieftains, and came to good understanding with

Justinian. To this king, Witigis the Goth sent an embassy to persuade him to come to his assistance in the Gothic War. Waccho, however, believed that his interest lay in alliance with the Empire, and the Gothic proposals were accordingly refused (539).[1] Seven years later, Audoin, father of Alboin the Invader, was elected king of the Lombards, and in his time the bond with the Empire was drawn yet closer. It seems that the Lombards were engaged in a continual desultory warfare with the Gepidae, their southern neighbours in Hungary. Justinian, who feared both tribes, endeavoured to weaken them and keep them occupied, by aiding each in turn against the other.[2] Inasmuch, however, as the Lombards were slightly inferior in strength, the Emperor was more inclined to take their side; and at length, in order to put a check upon the Gepidae, he actually invited Audoin to migrate across the Danube into the further parts of Pannonia between the Danube and the Drave, in the neighbourhood of the city of Noricum, or Noreia.[3] The folly of this policy of summoning a savage tribe from distant Hungary and settling them within a few days' march of Italy, is obvious enough to us; but Justinian was blind to the danger. He was even mad enough to ask for Lombard assistance in Italy itself; and in 552 A.D. we find 2500 picked Lombard warriors, with 3000 attendants, fighting under Justinian's banner in the battle of Scheggia.[4] Their excesses after the victory necessitated an honourable dismissal, and they were escorted back, by Narses' order, to the Julian Alps. Nevertheless, they had set their feet within the enchanted land, and they were not forgetful of the things which they had seen. A few more years they waited impatiently upon the threshold. Then under a new king they ventured forth once more; and this time they did not return. Thus was the newly recovered province lost, almost before it was won, through the short-sighted policy of Justinian.

The greater part of Audoin's reign was spent in fighting against the Gepidae. Of the hostilities of the two nations, of

[1] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* ii. 22.

[2] Such was Justinian's general policy in dealing with barbarians, as is noted by Agathias *Hist.* v. 14.

[3] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iii. 33; Paul. *Hist. Lang.* i. 22.

[4] Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iv. 26; Paul. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 1.

their alternate appeals to Constantinople, of their successes, truces, treaties, and various barbarities, we have confused accounts which need not here be disentangled. It is sufficient to say that about the year 554, the Lombards in a great battle defeated the Gepidae, reducing them to a condition of semi-dependence. Some ten years later Audoin died, and was succeeded by Alboin, the son of his first wife Rodelinda.

The old saga has much to say of Alboin. A handsome youth, with a tall strong body seasoned to battle-toils; a man of reckless courage, with a nature which, though brutal and untamed, was not without some elements of nobility, he was well adapted to become the hero of his wild and savage countrymen. An early exploit serves to throw a light upon his character.[1] In the last great battle with the Gepidae—so Paul relates the story—the two royal princes, Alboin the Lombard, and Thorismund son of Thorisind the Gepid king, met in single combat. Thorismund was killed, and his fall, by disheartening the Gepidae, decided the fortune of the day. The conquering Lombards celebrated their victory with a great feast; and at this banquet Alboin, who had done so much, desired to take his place at the king's table as "the king's guest." But his father would by no means suffer him; "for," quoth he, "it is not according to our customs that a king's son should sit at table with his father until he has become son-at-arms to some neighbouring king." Then Alboin, without waiting, took forty young companions and rode away to the Gepid king himself, the father of the slain Thorismund, and boldly claimed adoption at his hands. Now, hospitality was the one thing sacred to these barbarians; so Thorisind welcomed Alboin courteously, and made him a feast, and set him at his right hand in his dead son's place. But as the banquet proceeded, the king fell gloomy, sighed, and finally broke out in uncontrollable grief: "How I love that place!" he cried, glancing at Alboin's seat; "but how grievous is he who sits thereon!" Thereupon a younger son of Thorisind cast a furious insult at the Lombards, alluding to their white gaiters: "You are like stinking mares."[2] "Go to the Asfeld," came the retort immediately, "and you will see how these same mares can kick. Your brother's bones lie scattered about the

[1] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* i. 23, 24.

[2] "Fetilae sunt equae, quas similatis."

plain like any wretched nag's." In a moment there was an uproar. The Gepidae sprang to their feet; the Lombards clustered together and seized their arms. But before a blow could be struck, the king himself rushed in between the raging men, and commanded them, on pain of his displeasure, to keep the peace. So Gepidae and Lombards sat down again together; and when the last wassail-bowl was drained, the king presented Alboin with his dead son's arms, and sent him away in safety to his friends.

Alboin became king of the Lombards in 565, and immediately afterwards there was a fresh outbreak of hostilities between the Lombards and the Gepidae. The generous Thorisind was by this time dead. The new chieftain of the Gepidae was named Cunimund, and he had a beautiful daughter, Rosamund, whom Alboin loved, but wooed without success. Finding at length that all his overtures were rejected, Alboin took short measures, and, waiting a favourable opportunity, carried the princess off. War now broke out afresh. On this occasion the Gepidae were supported by Imperial troops, with the assistance of whom they succeeded in inflicting on the Lombards a severe repulse.[1] Alboin made proposals for peace, offering even to contract a legal marriage with the outraged Rosamund. But the Gepidae, strong in their Roman alliance, refused to come to terms. Then Alboin in his turn looked around for an ally. He sent ambassadors to the chief or Chagan of the Avars—a savage Tartar tribe, which had recently been harrying the northern provinces of the Empire in a series of destructive raids—and by skilfully playing on his ambition and cupidity, persuaded him to make a league against the Gepidae.[2] The conditions of the treaty thus concluded are remarkable. The Avars were to receive at once a tenth of the flocks and herds belonging to the Lombards, and, in the event of victory, the whole of the Gepid territory and a half of the spoil. Further, it was agreed —if not at this time, at least shortly afterwards—that if the Lombards should in the future secure a footing in Italy, they should give up to the Avars their settlements in Pannonia;

[1] Theophylact *Hist.* vi. 10.

[2] Menander *Hist.* 11, 12 (ed. Bonn, pp. 303, 304); Paul. *Hist. Lang.* i. 27. Theophylact (i. 3) calls the Avars, ἀπιστότατον ἔθνος καὶ ἀπληστότατον τῶν νομάδην βιούντων.

provided, however, that in case they were driven back and forced to return, they should receive their own again.[1] This curious compact was finally settled about 567.

The Lombards and Avars now invaded the land of the Gepidae in two separate detachments. Cunimund was in despair, and sent to the Emperor, urgently requesting succour. But only evasive answers were returned from Constantinople, and no Imperial troops appeared. Cunimund then abandoned hope, yet determined to make a final gallant stand against his hereditary foe. So the two tribes met in battle for the last time in 567, and the Gepidae were utterly defeated, so that scarcely a man survived to tell the tale. The tribe henceforth vanishes from history. Alboin slew Cunimund with his own hand, had his head cut off, and the skull fashioned into a drinking-cup; and Rosamund, the innocent cause of all these happenings, was forced into marriage with the man who killed her father.[2] Then the Avars settled on the conquered territory, and the Lombards had leisure to turn their attention to the conquest of Italy.

The moment, it seems, was favourable for attack, for Narses the Patrician had fallen on evil days. During the fifteen years of his government of a bankrupt and ruined country, he had dealt hardly with the people. Money was squeezed out to fill the Emperor's treasury, and more money for Narses' private benefit, and the rascally methods of Alexander the Scissors were again put into use. The people bore it for a time without complaining, but at last murmurs arose which were heard even in Constantinople. Doubtless, if Justinian had been yet alive, no notice would have been taken. But Justinian was dead; and poor mad Justin and his meddlesome wife Sophia seemed to have welcomed this opportunity of quarrelling with an official who had perhaps become too powerful. At any rate, Narses was disgraced in 567, and retired to Rome in dudgeon. The terrible old man, the conqueror of the Goths, the only one capable of defending the Italian frontier against the gathering swarms of barbarians, was withdrawn from power at the very moment when, by the extermination of the Gepidae, the Lombards were left free for bolder enterprise. And in his place there came a man of straw, the Count Longinus, from whom

[1] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 7.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 27.

neither Lombards nor any one else, save the oppressed provincials, had aught to apprehend. It really seems as if a fatal blindness had fallen on the Emperors—on Justinian and on Justin—who by their own miscalculated acts had levelled barrier after barrier, and made the way straight before the Lombards into the land of their desire.

One would think that Alboin would scarcely have required a formal invitation to attract him into Italy. However, according to more than one account, even this inducement was not wanting. The Papal Biographer, Isidore of Seville, Fredegarius, and Paul the Deacon unite in saying that Narses, in his fury and disgrace, sent a message to the Lombards, calling them to come and take possession of Italy. This story is of considerable interest. It is very nearly contemporary with the supposed event, having been committed to writing within twenty years of Narses' death. In its earliest and simplest form it is found in the *Life of Pope John the Third*, written probably some time between 579 and 590; and is as follows: "Then the Romans, influenced by envy, represented to Justin and Sophia that it would be more expedient for the Romans to serve the Goths than the Greeks; for, said they, 'when Narses the Eunuch rules, he subjects us to slavery, and the Most Religious Emperor is ignorant of this; either free us and the city of Rome from his hand, or assuredly we will serve the barbarians.' When Narses heard this he said, 'If I have done evil to the Romans, evil shall I find.' Then Narses, going forth from Rome, came to Campania, and wrote to the nation of the Langobardi that they should come and take possession of Italy. When John the Pope knew that they had made representations to the Emperor against Narses, he went in haste to Naples, and begged him to return to Rome. Then Narses said, 'Tell me, Holy Father, what evil have I done to the Romans? I will go to the feet of him that sent me, that all Italy may know how with all my strength I have laboured on her behalf.' Pope John replied, 'I will go more quickly than thou canst depart from this land.' Therefore Narses returned with the Most Holy Pope."[1] Very obscure as this narrative is, it at any rate stands as evidence that, within two decades of Narses' death, the story of his treachery was in circulation. And this story of the Papal Biographer

[1] *Lib. Pont. Vita Joan. III.*

is confirmed by Isidore.[1] A variant form of the statement is given by Fredegarius, who relates that Justin and Sophia sent a threatening message to Narses, and that the Empress further forwarded to the Eunuch a golden distaff, telling him that he might henceforth rule over spinning-girls, but not over a nation. Whereat Narses exclaimed, "I will spin a thread which neither Justin nor the Augusta shall be able to unravel"; and he straightway invited the Lombards from Pannonia.[2] Lastly, Paul the Deacon reiterates the statement of the Papal Biographer, combining it with a modified version of Fredegarius, and adding that, as an enticement to the Lombards, Narses sent them "many kinds of fruit and samples of other products with which Italy abounds."[3] Such is the story in its final and elaborated form.

In forming an estimate of the truth of the tale, the following considerations may be kept in mind. First, the picturesque details—the golden distaff, the retort of Narses, the fruit of Italy—are found only in writers which belong respectively to the middle of the seventh and to the eighth centuries. Between their period and the disgrace of Narses there was plenty of time for a legend to grow up. Hence the accounts of Fredegarius and Paulus may justly be regarded with suspicion. On the other hand, the statement of the Papal Biographer, confirmed by Isidore, proves without shadow of doubt that, within a little while of Narses' death the story of his treachery was current. But was this story based on fact, or was it merely unsubstantiated rumour? In favour of the latter hypothesis, it may be urged that there is no hint of the alleged transaction in Gregory of Tours, or in Marius of Aventicum, or in the *Annals of Ravenna*. Nor does rank treachery of this kind seem to be quite consonant with what we otherwise know of Narses' character. His retirement to Naples, again, immediately before sending such an invitation, is not what we should naturally expect; and the subsequent sending of his corpse to Constantinople would have been strange had he been really guilty of high treason. It may be further suggested that the events

[1] Isidor. *Chron.* 116 (Migne *P. L.* lxxxiii.).

[2] Fredegarius *Hist. Franc. Epit.* 65.

[3] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 5. The *Origo Gentis Lang.* c. 5 (ed. Waitz ap. M.G.H.) has, "invitatos a Narsete."

which followed immediately on the deposition of Narses may well have given rise to the rumour that the unpopular Patrician was not unconcerned in the troubles of his ungrateful master; and the death of Narses soon afterwards would lessen the chance of contradiction. Hence, we may imagine that what was originally but idle gossip, circulating freely, grew by degrees into stereotyped form, and was finally accepted by uncritical writers as veritable history.

Be this as it may, in the spring of 568 Alboin was ready to march into Italy. There was a great muster in Pannonia. Besides the Lombards themselves, a heterogeneous throng assembled, drawn from many nationalities—Saxons, Gepidae, Bulgarians, Sarmatae, Suavi, and various tribes of Noricum and Pannonia, the names of which, Paul tells us, were preserved in Italian villages in the time of Charlemagne.[1] It boded ill for Italy that not one nation only was come against her, but a horde of many nations, tumultuous, savage, uncontrolled, and prepared to give free rein to their several national vices and ferocities. Perhaps the composite character of the invading band may account, in some degree, for the peculiar horror and detestation with which for centuries "the unspeakable Lombards" were regarded by the inhabitants of the conquered country.

On Easter Tuesday, in the April of 568, the march commenced.[2] Strange portents, it is said, were seen in Italy. The blessed martyr Eutychius appeared to a bishop in a vision and uttered the threefold warning, "The end of all flesh is at hand! the end of all flesh is at hand! the end of all flesh is at hand!"[3] In the sky towards the north, fiery armies seemed to be fighting, and red clouds appeared to be flowing with blood.[4] Meanwhile the Lombards moved slowly across the Julian Alps. There is, by the Predil Pass, a certain mountain named Monte del Re, the slopes of which afford a magnificent view of the province of Friuli. A popular legend of the eighth century connects this mountain with the coming of Alboin.

[1] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 26.

[2] The date of the invasion given by Paul. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 7, is found in the *Origo*, c. 5, and is confirmed by Greg. *Epp.* v. 39; xiii. 41. Secundus Trident. (*Script. rerum Langobard. saec. vi.–ix.* p. 25, *n.* 3) wrongly gives 569.

[3] Greg. *Dial.* iii. 38.

[4] *Ibid.* iii. 38; *Hom. in Ev.* i.; Paul. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 5.

Here, men used to say, the barbarian chieftain, like a Hebrew leader long ago, climbed up to feast his eyes upon the land of promise; while down below swung past the files of long-haired Lombards, marching on to conquest.[1] But the picturesque story is probably nothing more than an invention of the peasants, who could not otherwise account for a puzzling local name.

When the Lombards emerged into Venetia, they found no one to oppose them or dispute their passage.[2] Only at the River Piave, Bishop Felix of Treviso met them, praying that his Church might not be harmed. Alboin, in a fit of generosity, granted his petition, and a charter was prepared safeguarding all the rights and prerogatives of the Trevisan Church. Then the host moved on, took without trouble the cities of Vicenza and Verona, and overran Venetia. The Patriarch of Aquileia, unable to save his city, fled with the treasury of the Church, to the island of Grado. The Byzantine Governor skulked in Ravenna, and made no sign. Mantua, Padua, Monselice, and the neighbourhood of the lagoons alone remained unconquered. So far the Lombards were triumphant.[3]

Before quitting Venetia, Alboin took measures to secure his conquest. He had no notion of permitting the Avars or other wild trans-Alpine tribes to follow in his steps and rob him of his new domains. He therefore determined to leave a strong detachment to guard the passes of the north-eastern hills, through which he had himself just come, and which alone afforded easy access into Italy. A troop of warriors of the noblest Lombard blood was carefully selected and provided

[1] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 8.

[2] Why was there no resistance? The Imperial authorities must certainly have had sufficient warning of the invasion to make their preparations. But (1) to drive back the Lombards it would have been necessary to oppose to them a really national resistance, and for this purpose it would have been necessary to arm the whole able-bodied population of Italy. Such a course might have been dangerous, and would certainly have been a violation of the settled policy of the Empire (see *Novel.* 85). (2) The resources of the State were unequal to the maintenance of a mercenary army in Italy sufficiently large to repel the invasion. Doubtless there were statesmen in Constantinople who felt that Justinian's Western conquests had weakened instead of strengthening the Empire, by extending it to an unmanageable size, and who therefore were not unwilling to let Italy go. At all events, the people of Italy were abandoned to their fate.

[3] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 9–14.

with a sufficiency of the king's best brood mares; and this band, under the command of Grasulf, Alboin's nephew and Master of the Horse, was settled in quarters at Cividale, in Friuli, and charged to drive back any adventurous wanderers from Pannonia, and to keep Venetia safe.[1] Then, after short delay, confiding in the qualities of his new Warden of the Marches, Alboin resumed his way towards the west.

Through the year 569 the stream of the invasion swept over the province of Liguria. The archbishop of Milan fled to Genoa, which city, together with certain others on the coast, and Piacenza, managed to repel attacks. The rest of the towns seem to have surrendered without striking a blow. On September 3, 569, Alboin entered Milan, and for the rest of the year he overran the district at his pleasure. There was no resistance. More fortunate than Alaric or Attila, Alboin found no Stilicho, no Aetius, to hamper his movements. Unlike Theodoric, he had no barbarian rival to dispute his claim. Belisarius was dead. Narses was living in privacy at Rome, brooding over his wrongs. Incapable Longinus remained shut up amid the marshes of Ravenna, and did not stir a finger. The population of North-Western Italy was sunk in stupor. Worn out with years of grinding misery, they had no energy or spirit left. The country, too, had been recently desolated by another visitation of the pestilence. Whole villages were deserted, save by starving dogs; and farms and country houses were left without inhabitants. In the fields the flocks and herds strayed about unshepherded, the crops were left unsickled, though the harvest-time was past, and the purple clusters hung ungathered on the leafless vines. A primeval silence was upon the country-side. No voice was heard in the lanes, no shepherd's whistle or fowler's call; only strange rumblings and ghostly noises, the tramp of phantom armies and the blare of unseen trumpets, terrified the trembling peasant as he lay awake at dead of night in his bereaved and ruined home.[2]

In one place, however, the Lombards encountered a vigorous resistance. Pavia, the ancient Ticinum, was a strongly fortified town, and seems to have been held by a large Imperialist garrison. On the approach of Alboin, the citizens closed the

[1] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 9.
[2] *Ibid.* 4, 26.

gates, and for no less than three years succeeded in keeping the Lombards at bay (569–572). Unused as he was to the tedium of blockades, Alboin swore a cruel oath that he would utterly destroy all the people of the place. But Providence ordered otherwise. For when at last the plucky garrison could hold out no longer, and Alboin, meditating atrocities, was riding through St. John's Gate into the conquered town, his charger suddenly fell under him. The king drove his spurs into the animal, and his men belaboured it with their lances, but nothing could make it rise. Then cried a Lombard soldier, "Remember, my lord king, the cruel vow that thou hast made, and cancel it. For there is a Christian people in this city." So Alboin retracted his oath, the horse got up, and the triumphal procession continued on its way to the palace of Theodoric, where the new "Lord of Italy" took up a permanent abode. The people of Pavia, assured of their safety, came crowding round the palace with shouts of joy—and certainly the vanquished citizens had no reason to regret their change of masters; for Pavia became from now the capital of the Lombard kings, a centre of high importance for long years to come.[1]

During these three years (569–572) Alboin, of course, did much besides blockade Pavia. In the year 570 he was employed, apparently, in reducing the valley of the Po. Here the work of conquest was even easier than elsewhere, for the people, in addition to the pestilence, were suffering from a famine, which, following a year of plenty in 569, raged over Italy with terrible results. In the spring of 571 Alboin crossed the Appenines into Tuscany, beyond which he made no more advance. Two of his nobles, however, Farwald and Zotto, pressed forward to the south, and here, in 571, laid the foundation of the powerful duchies of Spoleto and Benevento,[2] which, rapidly developing in territory and power, became ere long the rivals of the Lombard monarchy itself. But meanwhile Alboin came to a melancholy end, being murdered in 572[3] through the machinations of a revengeful woman. The story of his death, preserved for long

[1] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 26, 27.

[2] Paul. (*Hist. Lang.* iii. 33) seems to fix the date at 571 (591 – 20).

[3] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 28: "Postquam in Italia tres annos et sex menses regnavit" = May, 572. Agnellus *Lib. Pont. Eccl. Ravenn.* c. 96 dates June 28, 572. The *Excerptum Sangallense* (M.G.H. SS. antiq. ix. p. 336) has May, 572. Marius of Aventicum and John of Biclaro both give the year 572.

in the weird songs of Saxon and Bavarian minstrels, is not even yet forgotten.[1]

One day (so runs the saga) Alboin sat drinking with his chieftains in his palace at Verona. Deeds of valour were related, and the king himself told how he had conquered the Gepidae, and fashioned the skull of King Cunimund into a goblet. Then, in his intoxication, he called for the famous cup, and, filling it to the brim, sent it to Queen Rosamund, ironically bidding her "drink merrily with her sire." Rosamund smiled at the jest, and obeyed, but plotted vengeance in her heart. First she sought out Helmichis, the king's armour-bearer and foster-brother, and offered him her hand and kingdom if he would kill his master. Helmichis was tempted, but had scruples. He would not lift his own hand against his foster-brother, but he advised the queen to take into her confidence Peredeo the chamberlain, who might do the deed. Here again, however, Rosamund was baffled. Peredeo would have nothing to do with the plot, although for some reason he refrained from acquainting Alboin with the proposals that had been made to him. Then the queen devised another plan. Peredeo had a mistress, one of Rosamund's bower-maidens, whom he was wont to visit in the darkness. One night this girl was detained, and the queen herself was substituted in her place, Peredeo all the while suspecting nothing until, in the morning light, he found he had to choose between killing the king, whose honour he had wronged, and getting killed himself. The chamberlain preferred to live. Not long after this Alboin was taking a siesta in his chamber. On pretext of quiet, the palace wing, by Rosamund's orders, had been cleared of soldiers and attendants. The arms that hung on the walls had also been removed, and the great sword above the bed had been tightly fastened into its sheath, so that it could not be drawn. While the king was sleeping, Rosamund admitted Peredeo. We read of a confused scuffle—Alboin starting suddenly into wakefulness, tugging at the sword which would not leave its scabbard, keeping at bay his assassin for a moment with a whirling footstool, and finally falling, done to death "like a mere poltroon, by the council of one miserable woman." Thus

[1] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 28, 29, 30; Agnellus *Lib. Pont. Eccl. Ravenn.* 96. Agnellus makes the death of Alboin the text of a quaint little sermon to married men, which see in *loc. cit.*

untimely ended the career of Alboin the Invader, and thus the Gepid nation and King Cunimund were avenged. The Lombard braves made a great wailing for their king, and buried his body under a flight of steps adjoining the palace. Paul relates that in the eighth century this tomb was opened by a certain foolish one—Giselpert, duke of Verona—who removed a sword and other ornaments which he found therein, and ever afterwards delighted to boast that "he had seen Alboin."

A word may be added respecting the fate of the other actors in this tragedy of Alboin. When her husband was dead, Rosamund gave her hand to Helmichis, as she had promised, but found that she was powerless to give him also the kingdom. Detested by the Lombards, the guilty pair were soon obliged to seek safety in flight. A secret messenger was accordingly sent to Byzantine Longinus, and at a time arranged Rosamund and Helmichis escaped aboard an Imperial vessel provided by the Governor, carrying with them all the royal treasure, together with the Princess Albswinda, Alboin's daughter by his former wife. So they reached Ravenna. But now Longinus, wearied of his monotonous life in Theodoric's great palace amid the orchards and canals, found an agreeable relief in the society of his beautiful and alluring guest, and he suggested to her that she should get rid of Helmichis, and transfer herself and her treasure permanently to his own safe keeping. Rosamund was nothing loth to become "the lady of Ravenna"; so one day, when Helmichis came from his bath, she offered him, as though for his refreshment, a cup of doctored wine. The unsuspecting man swallowed half of the contents, then suddenly felt himself to be poisoned. At once he drew his sword, and presenting its point at her breast, he forced the miserable woman to drain what was left in the goblet to the dregs. And that was the end of the plots and the crimes of Helmichis and Rosamund.

As for Peredeo the chamberlain, there was a legend in Paul's time that he was sent to Constantinople, where he slew a monstrous lion in the Hippodrome. The Emperor, fearing that so strong a man might become a danger, ordered his eyes to be put out. But this sixth-century Samson, too, had his revenge upon his Philistines. Concealing two sharp knives in his sleeves, Peredeo craved an audience with the Emperor, alleging that he had a secret of the highest importance to

communicate. Two great nobles were deputed to hear the revelation. Peredeo drew close to them, as if to whisper; then suddenly, with either hand, flashed a knife into their bodies, dealing each a mortal blow. So the strong chamberlain revenged himself, and for each of his lost eyes he robbed the Emperor of a trusty councillor.

After Alboin's death the Lombards elected as king one of their noblest warriors, named Cleph. Of this man's reign no details are preserved. But Paul tells us that he cruelly entreated such of the Roman aristocrats as fell into his hands—killing some with the sword and banishing others from Italy. When he had ruled for eighteen months, Cleph was assassinated, in 574, by one of his servants, and after this there was an interregnum for ten years.[1]

[1] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 31.

CHAPTER V

GREGORY AS PREFECT AND MONK

About the year 573, when Lombard Cleph was making havoc of the old Roman noblesse, killing some with the sword and banishing others from the soil of Italy, and when Farwald and Zotto were carving their great southern duchies out of the undefended territories of the Empire, the mists of history lift, and we are permitted to get a view of the hero of our biography. Amid wars and rumours of wars, famines, invasions, pestilences, Narses-cabals, and Rosamund-murders and adulteries, the little boy whom we last saw studying Latin literature, and watching Pelagius the First purge himself in the ambo of St. Peter's, had grown to manhood. How he lived during the two decades, and how he occupied himself in the ruined city where great patricians lived like beggars in their dilapidated palaces, and the Head of the Church was reduced to imploring a Gallic bishop to send him clothes for his impoverished flock, we have no means of knowing. The biographers are silent as to the doings of these years, and the history of the city of Rome itself is, for the period, almost a blank.

In the greater world beyond the walls, however, some notable events had taken place. In the first place, the veteran Belisarius had quitted for ever the warfare of the world, after saving Constantinople in remarkable fashion from the Kotrigur Huns. Then, a few months after—in November, 565—Justinian himself had passed away from his gilded palace on the Bosphorus. As the last of the old line of Roman Emperors, as the last Emperor who could honestly claim to rule the world from the Danube to the African deserts, and from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Euphrates, Justinian closed an epoch. His successors at

Constantinople were but "slightly Romanized Greeks," and under their feeble government the Empire split into fragments, and the old Roman tradition was lost. Justinian's end, like that of Louis XIV., with whom he has been compared, was pathetically inglorious. A theology-demented dotard, fumbling all night over crabbed patristic parchments, a persecutor of dead divines and luckless living Popes, a spinner of theological subtleties which brought upon himself at last the imputation of heresy,[1]—such was the Justinian known to the world in his later days. And men, forgetful of all the great things he had done, breathed a sigh of relief when they heard that he had gone, and welcomed with acclamation the Curopalates Justin, an Emperor with the germs of madness latent in him, and destined to develop it strangely before long.

In Italy the Patrician Narses completed the restoration of the Salarian Bridge of the Anio, not without pompous inscriptions commemorative of his "most glorious" self.[2] Then for the remainder of his term of office he devoted his energies to accumulating immense treasure. There is a story that he buried his horde in a cistern which he caused to be dug in one of his palaces in a certain town of Italy. All who were engaged upon this work were slain upon its completion, and the secret was entrusted only to one old man, who, after Narses' death, revealed it to the Emperor Tiberius. The treasure was then exhumed, but so vast was it that many days were spent in removing it from its hiding-place.[3]

Immediately after Narses' deposition came the invasion of the Lombards; and in 571 the much-dreaded host drew alarmingly close to Rome. We do not know, however, what measures were taken to avert the danger. All that is recorded of these years in Rome is that Pope John the Third "restored and enlarged the cemeteries of the holy martyrs," and completed the Church of the Holy Apostles, which Pelagius had begun to build on the Via Lata, but had not lived to finish.[4] It was a

[1] Aphthartodocetism. *Vita Eutychii* (Act. SS., April 6); Evagrius *Hist.* iv. 38–40; Theophanes *A. M.* 6057; *Nicetii Ep.* (Labbe *Conc.* v. p. 832); Zonaras, vol. iii. p. 173; Cedrenus, vol. i. p. 680.

[2] *Corpus. Inscr. Lat.* vi. 1199.

[3] Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* v. 20.

[4] *Lib. Pont. Vita Joan. III.*

spacious building decorated with paintings and mosaics, and six of its ancient columns survive in the present day. It is a curious circumstance, and significant of the times, that amid all their poverty and wretchedness, the Romans should have found the means of erecting a new church, and further, that of all the occurrences in Rome during this thrilling period, that of the completion of the basilica is about the only one recorded. For the sake of its associations with this dim and troubled time, the building of Clement the Eleventh, on the site of John's basilica, is worth a passing visit.

In the mean time Gregory had been attracting some attention. Perhaps already he had begun to develop certain of those valuable qualities which were afterwards to win for him the seldom-granted title of "Magnus"—foresight, prudence, capacity for action and administration, tenacity of purpose, ability to rise superior to difficulties apparently overwhelming. A man of such parts was not to be despised in times of peril and perplexity, particularly when the Lombards were about. Added to this, he was a man of rank, when few of honourable name remained in Rome; a man of wealth, when most of the citizens were subsisting on charity doles; a man of a certain learning in an age of barbaric ignorance; and a man of notorious piety, well thought of by the ecclesiastical authorities. It is scarcely surprising that such a man in such environment should have rapidly come to the front. He was probably tried at first in some lesser office; he assisted, perhaps, in the collection and distribution of corn, occupied some subordinate place in the bureau of the Prefect. Then, as he proved himself a good man and true, higher advancement followed, until at last, about the year 573, we find him, at some thirty years of age, discharging the high functions of Prefect of the City of Rome.[1]

Gregory had thus become a very "illustrious" personage

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 4 says that Gregory was Praetor Urbanus; and in Greg. *Epp.* iv. 2 the best reading is "praeturam," not "praefecturam." But it seems fairly certain that by this time the office of Praetor had fallen into disuse; hence I adopt the alternative reading, "praefecturam." That Gregory was Prefect in 573 is proved from *Epp.* iv. 2, where he asserts that during his term of office he signed the "cautio" given by Laurentius when he became bishop of Milan (January 22, 573). But we do not know how long he had already held office, or how soon afterwards he resigned. Almost all the dates of Gregory's early life are conjectural.

indeed. The Prefecture was the highest dignity in Rome, and although by this time its splendour had become a little tarnished, yet even in the last half of the sixth century it was an honour highly esteemed.

Respecting this office, as it was in former days, we have sufficient information. The Urban Prefect was the head of the Senate, of which august body he was likewise the peculiar champion and protector. He punished those who insulted it, saw that no unworthy persons were elected into it, and presided at the trial of any of its members. He also convened the assemblies, in which he had the right of speaking first. Clad in a mantle of Imperial purple, the Urban Prefect was privileged to ride in state through the streets of Rome, in a splendid car drawn by four horses gorgeously caparisoned. He had supreme civil and criminal jurisdiction not only within the city, but within a radius of a hundred miles from the Capitol; and appeals could be made to him from the suburbicarian provinces. His responsibilities were heavy. The management of all the important affairs in the city was under his control. The care of the grain supplies, the distribution of the free doles, the repair of the aqueducts, baths, sewers, banks and bed of the Tiber, the supervision of Portus,—all these devolved ultimately upon him. The officers employed in taking the census, the collectors of taxes, the superintendents of the markets and granaries, the curators of public works, the heads of the city police, a whole army of officials, depended on him and rendered to him their accounts. Within a circumscribed area his authority was almost regal. He maintained, for the transaction of his multifarious business, a large staff of deputies, secretaries, notaries, clerks, and ushers, and such as pleased him he could promote at will to posts much coveted by place-hunters. In short, even as late as the days of Cassiodorus,[1] the Most Illustrious Prefect of the City of Rome was a real power, as conspicuous and consequental a personage as any in Italy.

Of course, in 573 this brilliant office was shorn of much of its magnificence, and its responsibilities were considerably diminished. The Senate, over the debates of which the Prefect once presided, was a mere shadow of its ancient self, charged only with the duty of inspecting weights and measures. The

[1] Cassiod. *Var.* vi. 4.

numerous officials who had once controlled the business of their various departments under the Prefect's supervision, had mostly disappeared. There was, for example, no longer work for Curators of Baths, or Theatres, or Statues, when the baths were waterless and the theatres deserted and the statues fallen or broken; nor was there need of a Minister of Public Spectacles, when the only surviving spectacles were the ceremonies of the Church. Thus the functions of the Prefect were curtailed by the closing of many of the departments of the old civil service. Circumstances, moreover, and in particular the Lombard invasion, had tended to develop the authority of two other officials at the expense of the Urban Prefect. The first of these was the Pope, who was destined within the next few years to become by far the most important personage in Rome. The second was the Magister Militum, who, though not yet resident in the city, was always stationed somewhere in the neighbourhood, and who, in addition to the conduct of military affairs, claimed jurisdiction in all things pertaining to the public safety. Thus overshadowed as he was by these two powers, the ecclesiastical and the military, the Urban Prefect gradually dwindled into insignificance, until in the seventh century, for a season, he altogether disappeared.

Nevertheless, at the time when Gregory held office, the Urban Prefect was still of some consideration. Within the walls of Rome the civil administration rested in his hands, his jurisdiction over the citizens being almost unimpaired. In financial matters he was yet the great authority. The government officials, of whom he had the superintendence, were more in number, perhaps, than is usually supposed; since at a later date we find such officers as a Curator of the Aqueducts[1] and a Palace Architect[2] still in existence. Further, the Prefect acted with the Pope in buying and distributing grain, and he co-operated even with the Magister Militum in taking all necessary measures for the defence of the city. Certainly, though in some departments his authority was superseded, the office of Urban Prefect was still a dignified and influential one, a legitimate ground for pride in those who were sufficiently able to obtain it.

If Gregory was Prefect during 573, his anxieties must

[1] Greg. *Epp.* xii. 6. [2] *Ibid.* ix. 106.

have been great. Swarms of Lombards beset the city, and communications with Constantinople were cut off. In midst of the panic, on the 13th of July, Pope John died, and was buried in the Basilica of St. Peter. For some months the Church remained without a bishop—a circumstance which added to the prevailing confusion. Probably also in the same year Narses made an end of his sulky, unhappy life; and his body was placed in a leaden chest, and subsequently shipped to Constantinople.[1] Paul gives a good character to the old intriguer; calls him a very religious man, of the Catholic faith, a munificent almsgiver, a restorer of churches, a Christian so fervent in watching and prayer, that he gained his victories more by his abundant prayers to God than by all the munitions of war.[2] But the Roman people were not fond of him, and soon, as we have seen, began to circulate stories that were little to his credit. His death, nevertheless, was unfortunate at this juncture, as it removed from Rome a man most capable of giving counsel that might be trusted. The young Prefect of the City was left to act alone, and what with the Lombards clamouring outside the gates, and pauperism, disease, and misery rife within, his life can scarcely have been an enviable one. Perhaps it was the strain to which he was subjected at this time that gave Gregory a thorough distaste for office, and convinced him that a political career was not for him. Such a conviction gained, at any rate, an increasing hold upon his mind, until at last, after long consideration, he determined to abandon everything and become a monk.

Gregory's decision was not hurriedly taken. It was the fruit, not of any sudden emotion or mental shock, like that which caused Martin Luther to enter a convent, but of long meditation and inward struggle. Endowed by nature with a thoughtful disposition, which had been deepened by the circumstances of his education and environment, Gregory had for some time experienced—so he said himself in after-years[3]—that strong religious impulse to a stricter life, which was called, in the language of the period, the "grace of conversion." He felt that he had received from the Spirit of God that desire for

[1] *Lib. Pont. Vita Joan. III.*; Paul. Diac. ii. 11.
[2] Paul. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 3.
[3] Greg. *Epp.* v. 53*a*, § 1; cf. Paul. Diac. *Vita* 3; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 4.

the knowledge of eternity which, as men then believed, could only be realized in the contemplative life by souls enlightened through abstinence and prayer. Nevertheless, he hesitated long, and put off taking the final step. Custom and habit bound him to secular life, and he tried to persuade himself that it would be better to remain a layman. He hoped that, while outwardly engaged in the service of the world, he might yet at the same time be inwardly the servant of God. But after a while he found that in this hope he was but deceiving himself, that the influence of the world in which he lived was growing upon him, that his thoughts were being more and more absorbed in temporal concerns, that he was steadily becoming of the world worldly. He felt that he had reached the cross-roads, and that the great choice could be deferred no longer.[1]

Although he was not an ambitious or self-seeking man, it is very possible that Gregory was influenced, in coming to his determination, by another and less spiritual consideration. He found himself in the prime of life, rich, popular, holding the highest office in Rome. What was to follow now? Gregory was a man liberally endowed with common sense, and he must have known that Rome no longer provided scope for the energies of a politician. There was no career in the ruined city for a secular statesman. Already he had reached the highest honours to which a Roman layman could aspire, and in this direction there was no possibility of further advancement. Certainly he might, if he wished, migrate to Constantinople, and pursue a political career amid the cabals and intrigues of the Imperial court. But such a life was little to his taste.

[1] It was, perhaps, with some thoughts of his own renunciation that in after-years, preaching in the Church of SS. Nereus and Achilles on their festival, Gregory spoke as follows:—"Sancti isti, ad quorum tumbam consistimus, florentem mundum mentis despectu calcaverunt. Erat vita longa, salus continua, opulentia in rebus, fecunditas in propagine, tranquillitas in diuturna pace; et tamen cum in seipso floreret, iam in eorum cordibus mundus aruerat. Ecce iam mundus in se ipso aruit, et adhuc in cordibus nostris floret. Ubique mors, ubique luctus, ubique desolatio, undique percutimur, undique amaritudinibus replemur; et tamen caeca mente carnalis concupiscentiae ipsas eius amaritudines amamus, fugientem sequimur, labenti inhaeremus. Et quia labentem retinere non possumus, cum ipso labimur, quem cadentem tenemus. Aliquando nos mundus delectatione sibi tenuit; nunc tantis plagis plenus est, ut ipse nos iam mundus mittat ad Deum." (*Hom. in Ev.* 28. § 3.)

The great Byzantine ministers, as he well knew, were only a degree removed from slaves, utterly dependent, amid all their grandeur, on the whims and caprices of an irresponsible despot, who could make them or unmake them as the fancy took him. Such gilded servitude had no charms for Gregory, who, moreover, was pre-eminently a patriot, loving Italy and loving Rome, and regarding the dazzling life in Constantinople as a miserable exile. Thus Gregory found himself compelled to abandon, almost at the outset, all hope of winning distinction in a political career. At the same time, he could not but see that a splendid outlet for the energies and capacities of an ambitious man was provided by the Church. In Italy the Church was a power. The ecclesiastical hierarchy had an influence and a dignity which was daily on the increase. The Church held out prospects to a really able man, such as were to be found nowhere else. And although I would not by any means suggest that, in abandoning a political for a religious life, Gregory was influenced only or even mainly by ambition, yet I cannot doubt that he realized fully that the Church offered the likeliest field for the exercise of his talents, and that this consideration had some weight in bringing about his final decision.

Gregory's resolution was taken at last. His father, Gordianus, was already dead; and his mother, Silvia, had retired into a life of seclusion in the neighbourhood of the Basilica of St. Paul.[1] The Caelian Palace, together with the bulk of the Regionary's wealth, had fallen to Gregory, who had thus become one of the richest men in Rome. Now, however, he renounced it all. The greater part of his paternal inheritance he devoted to the foundation and endowment of monasteries. Of these, six were situated in Sicily, and may probably be identified with the Monasteries of St. Hermas, of SS. Maximus and Agatha, of St. Theodore, of St. Hadrian, the Praetorian Monastery, and the Nunnery of St. Martin.[2] The seventh and most famous of all—the celebrated Monastery of St. Andrew—was founded in

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 5, 9. Paul. Diac. *Vita* 3 inaccurately speaks of both parents as dead. Evidently he had not heard the legend of Silvia's silver dish (Joh. Diac. i. 10).

[2] Rocchus Pirrus *Sicil. Sacr.* ii. pp. 1301–1308. Cf. Mabillon *Ann. Bened.* tom. i. p. 164.

Gordianus's palace in Rome, close to the Church of St. John and St. Paul. On these religious houses Gregory settled sufficient revenues for the support of their inhabitants—his intention clearly being that the monks should not be distracted from their spiritual exercises by the necessity of labouring to procure the means of subsistence. The rest of his property he distributed among the poor. Then, having laid aside every sign of his former rank and wealth, the man whose silken robes and glittering jewels had dazzled all eyes when he drove in state processions through the city, donned the coarse dress of a monk, and began to learn the lessons of humility as a simple brother in the monastery he had founded.[1] The event we may date about the year 574.

There were already, of course, a great number of monasteries in Rome. Jerome, in his usual exaggerated way, had long ago declared that Rome was transformed into Jerusalem, the convents of the virgins being many, and the multitude of the monks innumerable.[2] Leo the First had built a monastery close to St. Peter's; and the success of St. Benedict at Monte Cassino had given an impetus to the movement, so that many a Roman ecclesiastic and pious layman had endeavoured, as the phrase was, "to increase his merits" by the foundation of houses dedicated to the service of God. About the year 589, when Monte Cassino was burnt by Duke Zotto, the Benedictine monks, carrying their precious Rule, fled to Rome, and were established in a building near the Lateran, which was thenceforth dedicated to St. John, and became for more than a century the principal home of the Benedictine Order.[3] It is not certain, however, that this was the first monastery in the Eternal City in which the Rule of Benedict was observed. On the contrary, it has

[1] Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* x. 1; Paul. Diac. *Vita* 3, 4; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 6, 7. John adds: "Primo sub Hilarionis, deinde sub Maximiani, venerabilium patrum, regimine, multis sibi sociatis fratribus, regulari tramite militavit." But Greg. *Dial.* iv. 21, without alluding to Hilarion, mentions a certain "Valentio, qui post in hac Romana urbe mihi, sicut nosti, meoque monasterio praefuit." We must, therefore, either identify Valentio with Hilarion, or insert the former in the list of abbats between Hilarion and Maximianus.

[2] Hieron. *Epp.* 126.

[3] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iv. 17. No precise date is given, but the majority of critics agree in placing the event in 589 or 590. Mabillon, however, would date as early as 580.

been claimed that this Rule was already used by Gregory in his establishment on the Caelian. The supporters of this theory have argued that before becoming a monk Gregory was, in all probability, well acquainted with the life and work of Benedict; that certainly in after-years he was familiar with the substance and the language of the famous Rule; that Augustine seems to have carried the Rule to Britain;[1] that, at a later time at least, the Gregorian monasteries in Sicily apparently observed the Rule; that there is independent evidence that the Rule had before this been very generally adopted throughout the monasteries of Italy.[2] There is, however, no conclusive proof that the Benedictine Rule was established in St. Andrew's Monastery in 574, or, indeed, that Gregory himself had any knowledge of it before that date. And therefore the controversy is without decisive results.[3] On the whole, however, it seems probable that, though the Rule of Benedict may not as yet have been adopted in its entirety in St. Andrew's Monastery, still it formed the groundwork of Gregory's regulations, and its general spirit and leading principles were carefully conserved. Such an institution as that of Monte Cassino would naturally be taken as a model for subsequent foundations, and the main features of the monastic discipline would be repeated. Hence we shall probably be not far wrong if we imagine that the life of Gregory at St. Andrew's was ordered for the most part in accordance with that Rule, "the marvellous discretion and

[1] Joh. Diac. iv. 82, and the *Benedictine Life of Gregory*, iii. 7.

[2] On this question, see the *Benedictine Life of Gregory*, i. 3 (Migne *P.L.* lxxv.); Baronius, ann. 581; and Mabillon *Ann. Bened.* tom. i. Appendix I. part 2, p. 655, *sqq.* On the subsequent history of St. Andrew's Monastery, the Benedictine Biographer, i. 2, § 6, writes: "Hoc asceterium postquam a monachis Benedictinis diu occupatum fuisset, Ioannis diaconi tempore Graecis monachis cesserat, forsitan Stephani III. beneficio, qui etiam Graecis tribuit aliud monasterium a se constructum, et S. Dionysio Areopagitae dicatum; at Benedictinam regulam sequentibus tandem restitutum est a Gregorio XIII. istud S. Andreae sanctuarium, et Camaldulensibus datum." For a privilegium to St. Andrew's Monastery, see Greg. *Epp.* i. 14*a*, and Appendix I.

[3] Practically, the controversy is of little importance. It was usual for founders of monasteries to frame rules for their monks from those already in existence, adding, subtracting, or modifying as they might think desirable. So Gregory may have adopted much from the Benedictine Rule, without accepting it in its entirety; certainly, when Pope, he had no scruple in modifying some of its enactments.

lucidity"[1] of which provoked at a later time his enthusiastic admiration.

The main principles which underlie the varied prescriptions of Benedict are three—the principle of Absolute Obedience; the principle of Simplicity of Living; and the principle of Constant Occupation. In other words, the good monk was required to resign his individual will, to minimize his appetites and wants, and to eschew all forms of idleness.

First is the principle of Obedience—"obedientia sine mora," prompt, cheerful, zealous, rendered to God and to the abbat as God's representative.[2] "Nullus in monasterio proprii sequatur cordis voluntatem," must be the motto of all.

This unqualified obedience must be rendered, in the first place, to the constituted monastic authorities. The head of the society was the abbat, who represented Christ; and about his orders there could be no questioning, and from his decision no appeal.[4] "We foresee," writes Benedict, "that it is expedient for the preservation of peace and charity, that the entire government of the monastery depend upon the will of the abbat."[5] Any brother who ventured to go anywhere or do anything, however trifling, or to receive any letter or present without the abbat's permission, was subject to punishment.[6] If a task was enjoined upon him utterly beyond his powers, he might state his difficulty humbly and patiently, but if his superior persisted in his command, he must obey at once, trusting in God's help.[7] On no account might any monk uphold or defend another, or communicate with those who were under the abbat's displeasure.[8] The abbat, further, was the sole arbiter of rewards and punishments, and in his decisions the whole body was bound to acquiesce.[9] This autocratic authority, however, was modified in three ways. In the first place, the abbat was elected from and by the community, who were to be guided in their choice by the virtue, learning, and practical wisdom of the candidate. If a man of evil life were by some chance elected, the bishop of the diocese and the neighbouring abbats had power, prior to his consecration, to set the election aside.[10] In the second place,

[1] Greg. *Dial.* ii. 36.
[2] *Benedicti Regula* 5.
[3] *Ibid.* 3.
[4] *Ibid.* 2.
[5] *Ibid.* 65.
[6] *Ibid.* 67, 54.
[7] *Ibid.* 68.
[8] *Ibid.* 69, 26.
[9] *Ibid.* 2, 24, 25, 44, 63.
[10] *Ibid.* 64.

when constituted, the abbat, in common with the rest of the community, was bound to the strict observance of the Rule[1]; in which, moreover, he is constantly reminded that he is to be a father to his monks, that he has received a charge of souls to be brought to God, that he will have to account for them at the judgment, that he is to exercise strict discipline indeed, but with kindness, patience, and consideration, adapting himself to the character of each individual, and always framing his regulations with that discretion "which is the mother of virtues."[2] Thirdly, on all matters of importance, the abbat was obliged to consult with the whole community, even the youngest being permitted to express his opinion. On minor questions he was to take the advice of senior monks. The final decision, however, always rested with himself.[3]

The obedience due to the abbat was also enjoined towards the other officials of the monastery, who exercised delegated authority—the deans, chosen from among the brethren for their merits and learning;[4] and the provost or prior, appointed by the abbat in council with "such of the brethren as have the fear of God before them."[5] These officers, assisting the superior in the government of the monastery, were to receive all due respect from the monks. At the same time, they themselves owed implicit obedience to the abbat, who might depose them from their places if he found them unworthy.

Besides obedience to the abbat and his delegates, the brethren were bound to render obedience to one another. It is true that in one sense all the monks were equal, patrician and peasant meeting on the common ground of religious confraternity.[6] Yet, on the other hand, there was a graduated scale according to which the monks took rank—their place in the scale depending on the date of their "conversion," the merit of their lives, or the appointment of the abbat. These "seniors" (not in respect of age, but of standing) were addressed as "Fathers" by the "juniors," by whom they were treated with deference and respect. The juniors were enjoined to ask their blessing, to rise from their seats when they passed by, and never to presume to sit in their presence unless expressly

[1] *Ben. Reg.* 3. [2] *Ibid.* 2, 3, 27, 36, 55, 63, 64, 65.
[3] *Ibid.* 3. [4] *Ibid.* 21. [5] *Ibid.* 65. [6] *Ibid.* 2.

bidden to do so.[1] If a junior offended one of the seniors, he was to throw himself prostrate at his feet, and there remain until he received his blessing and forgiveness. Thus, says Benedict, "the brethren shall mutually obey each other, knowing that by this path of obedience they shall go unto God."[2]

To foster this habit of prompt, uncomplaining obedience, Benedict trusted to the spirit, which, as he believed, the observance of the Rule would create among the brethren—the spirit of humility, that virtue on which he laid the greatest stress. For him the Christian life—and therefore, of course, the monastic life—was symbolized by the ladder of Jacob's vision. It rose from the humbled heart to God. Its two sides represented the body and the soul of man; its steps were the degrees of humility. The first step was the ever-present fear of God; the second was the surrender of self-will; the third was implicit obedience to authority; the fourth, patience in difficulties and even under ill-treatment; the fifth, humble confession to the abbat of all secret sins of act or thought; the sixth, contentment with the meanest condition, based upon a conviction of unworthiness; the seventh, not merely to proclaim, but really to believe one's self inferior to all; the eighth, to do only what is recommended by the Rule and the example of the superiors; the ninth, to practise silence; the tenth, not to be fond of laughing; the eleventh, to speak briefly, quietly, gravely, humbly; and the twelfth, to show humility by the very posture of the body, keeping the head bent and the eyes fixed upon the ground,—and this at all times, whether at work or in the oratory, in the monastery, in the garden, in the field, or on the road. "When all these degrees of humility have been surmounted," Benedict concludes, "the monk will presently come to that love of God which is perfect and casteth out fear—to that love, whereby everything which at the beginning he observed through fear, he shall now begin to do by custom, without any labour, naturally, as it were; not now through fear of hell, but for the love of Christ, out of a good custom and a delight in virtue."[3]

Benedict's second principle was that of Simplicity of Living. Necessaries were freely conceded, but all superfluities were entirely cut off. The sacrifice of all individual personal property was insisted on. "Especially let this vice be cut away

[1] *Ben. Reg.* 63. [2] *Ibid.* 71. [3] *Ibid.*, 7.

from the monastery by the very roots, that no one presume without leave of the abbat to give, receive, or hold as his own anything whatsoever, either book, or tablets, or pen, or anything at all; for they are men whose very bodies and wills are not in their own power."[1] All that was requisite for a monk to have was given him by the abbat—that is, the bare necessaries of life. For clothing each man was supplied with two tunics or shirts, two cowls (in winter lined with wool), a scapular, shoes and stockings, a girdle, a knife, a pen, a handkerchief, and tablets, "that all pretence of necessity may be taken away." If he went on a journey he was given in addition a pair of drawers, which, on his return, were replaced in the common wardrobe. For bedding a straw mattress, a blanket, coverlet, and pillow sufficed, the monks being required to sleep in their clothes.[2] To those who were in health, and especially to the young, the luxury of a bath was seldom granted.[3] As regards food, on the weekly fast-days and from the middle of September till Easter, one meal only was allowed. Throughout the rest of the year, however, and on Sundays, there was dinner at mid-day and supper in the evening. The food consisted of two cooked dishes, with a third of fruit or raw vegetables, a pound of bread (which must suffice for both dinner and supper), and about a pint of wine. There was to be total abstinence from the flesh of four-footed beasts, and the meals were to be eaten by daylight.[4] Special provisions were made, however, in favour of the young, the sick, and the infirm.[5] The monks themselves were bidden to cultivate a grave and decorous demeanour. Habits of silence were to be fostered, and all flippancy and buffoonery strictly repressed.[6] The mode of living thus prescribed is clearly the simplest possible: at the same time, however, the Benedictine regulations are remarkable for their careful avoidance of extreme rigour. The ordinance that there should be two hot dishes, "because of the infirmities of different people, so that he who cannot eat of one may make his meal of the other,"[7] the concession of animal food and the use of the bath

[1] *Ben. Reg.* 33. [2] *Ibid.* 55. [3] *Ibid.* 36.
[4] *Ibid.* 39–41. [5] *Ibid.* 36, 37. [6] *Ibid.* 6.

[7] In the matter of food, the contrast between a Benedictine monk and an Eastern ascetic is striking. The Elder Macarius ate only once a week; Anthony's daily repast consisted of bread, salt, water, and, at times, dates;

to the sick and weakly, the admonition to the abbat to take care that the dresses were of size suitable to the wearers, above all, the permission of wine, and that even in extra quantity for those engaged in arduous labours or living in hot climates,—all these provisions bear striking testimony to the kindliness and reasonableness of the legislator. Austerity without extravagance, discipline without harshness, simplicity with moderation—such was the key-note of the constitution of Benedict.

The third principle laid down in the Rule was the principle of Constant Occupation. "Idleness," said Benedict, "is the enemy of the soul."[1] He therefore arranged that his monks should be continually busy. Their exercises were of two kinds —mental and physical.

Of the former kind the first and most important occupation was worship, called in the Rule pre-eminently "the work of God." To the regulation of this worship Benedict devoted much care and attention.[2] He instituted the familiar canonical hours—Nocturns, Matins, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline—basing his arrangement probably on that of more primitive services, analogous to those now used in the Eastern Church. The Psalter was sung through once each week, being commenced afresh on Sundays at Matins; and Benedict enjoined that particular care should be taken to make the singing as good as possible.[3] Besides the public services, opportunities for meditation and private prayer were afforded to the monks.[4] Also from two to three hours on week-days, and a longer time on Sundays, were set apart for the study of Holy Scripture and other religious books[5]; and at meal-times and before Compline such books were read aloud to the assembled brethren.[6] In Benedict's monastery, and also probably at St. Andrew's, the literature was exclusively religious.

On the value of physical labour Benedict laid great stress. The good monk, he declared, must be a worker. Anchorites

Hilarion never ate before sunset; Simeon Stylites took food only on Sundays; the Younger Macarius lived for seven years on raw herbs and pulse; Alas, up to his eightieth year, never ate bread; the Boskoi lived on herbs. The Rule of Pachomius, however, was not severe in this matter (Palladius *Hist. Lausiac.* 38, 39).

[1] *Ben. Reg.* 48. [2] *Ibid.* 8–20. [3] *Ibid.* 19, 45, 47.
[4] *Ibid.* 52. [5] *Ibid.* 48. [6] *Ibid.* 38, 42.

and hermits might enjoy a life of contemplation; but only those deserved to be hermits who "after long probation in a monastery, have learnt to fight against the devil."[1] They must, in short, be educated for contemplation, and the best educator was manual toil. Hence the Master of the Rule appointed five or six hours each day to be spent on labour. Even on Sunday—a day devoted to worship and reading—"any who shall be so negligent and slothful as to be either unwilling or unable to meditate or read, shall have some work imposed upon him that he can do, and so avoid being idle."[2] Of this kind of labour there were several varieties. Some of the monks were employed in agriculture, some in the arts and crafts,[3] some in attending on the sick,[4] some in serving the abbat and his guests,[5] some in transacting the business of the monastery out of doors.[6] The more intellectual monks were entrusted with the education of the children.[7] Moreover, all the brethren in turn took their share of the work of the house—baking the bread, cooking the meals, and cleaning the rooms. The persons appointed to this office were chosen every week; and it marks the religious significance which Benedict wished to give to all work, that on Sunday morning after Matins, the monks elected, before commencing their task, invoked the help of God and desired the prayers of their brethren that their work might be done aright, and on the following Sunday they again requested the intercession of the community for all that had been done amiss, and thus with thanks to God and the benediction of the abbat retired from office.[8]

The disposition of all the work depended on the abbat. All necessary facilities were provided within the grounds of the monastery, so that no one—unless sent on a special commission—need go beyond the precincts.[9] And in all their tasks the monks were particularly warned to cultivate a spirit of humility. "If any of them be proud of the skill he has in his craft, because he thereby seems to gain something for the monastery, let him be removed from that craft and not exercise it again, unless, after humbling himself, he receive permission from the abbat."[10]

[1] *Ben. Reg.* 1. [2] *Ibid.* 48. [3] *Ibid.* 48, 57.
[4] *Ibid.* 36. [5] *Ibid.* 53. [6] *Ibid.* 67.
[7] *Ibid.* 70. [8] *Ibid.* 35. [9] *Ibid.* 66. [10] *Ibid.* 57.

Such were the main principles of Benedict's constitution; and the Rule which he drew up strikes us as a monument of legislative art, remarkable alike for its completeness, its simplicity, and its adaptability. The great founder, it is evident, had at once a profound knowledge of human nature and a profound sympathy with human weakness. He recognized that there were limits which ordinary Western piety could not safely overleap, and with wonderful practical sagacity he adapted his constitution to the necessities of men, not striving after an impossible ideal, but laying down sound, workable principles, capable of being put into execution in common life. His reasonableness and moderation are truly admirable.[1] He was content to frame "a tiny rule written for beginners;" to prescribe such observances only as should be within the powers of all who embraced the monastic life sincerely: and this, not because he was ignorant that there were greater heights of perfection attainable—to those who sought a loftier plane he commended the study of Holy Scripture and the Fathers, particularly "the Collations, Institutes, and Lives of the Fathers,"[2] and the Rule of Basil —but in condescension to the frailties of the majority of mankind. The concluding sentence of the prologue best expresses the spirit and aim of the Master of the Rule: "We therefore are now about to institute a school of divine servitude, in which we hope nothing will be ordained rigorous or burdensome. But if in some things we proceed with a little severity, sound reason so advising, for the amendment of vices or preservation of charity, do not straightway, for fear thereof, flee from the way of salvation, which is always strait and difficult in the beginning. But in process of time and with growth of faith, when the heart has once been enlarged, the way of God's commandments is run with unspeakable sweetness of love; so that, never departing from His teaching, but persevering in our monastery in His doctrine until death, we share now by patience in the sufferings of Christ, that we may hereafter deserve to be partakers of His kingdom."

With the help of Benedict's Rule, we are able to picture with

[1] See particularly chapters 31, 35–37, 40, 43.

[2] *Ibid.* 73. The allusion is to the works of Cassian. Benedict characterizes them as "bene viventium et obedientium monachorum instrumenta virtutum." They have been praised also by the founders of the Dominicans, Carthusians, and Jesuits.

some degree of vividness the kind of life which Gregory led in St. Andrew's Monastery—a peaceful life of unvarying routine, somewhat monotonous, but none the less grateful on that account to the harassed ex-Prefect. We can imagine this delicately nurtured lord, with the pale face and dreamy eyes which the Italian painters love to bestow upon their favourite saints, clad in his tunic and long black cuculla, now meditating in his cell on the mystic meaning of the Sacred Writ, now chanting the services in the quiet oratory, now copying laboriously the manuscripts of the Fathers; or perhaps engaged in menial work in dormitory or kitchen, or tending spring vegetables in the convent garden, or eating silently in the refectory, while the voice of the reader drones monotonously on, or in the class-room, making the lay-scholars wonder at the eloquence with which he expounds the Scriptures. Sometimes the quiet of his life is broken by the advent of visitors; for there would often be guests in the monastery, and Benedict had directed that all who came should be received "as Christ Himself, since He will say, *I was a stranger, and ye took Me in.*"[1] On these days the abbat would doubtless invite the illustrious brother to help entertain the strangers and pilgrims, who brought with them into their retreat the news and gossip of the outside world. But apart from such excitements, Gregory's existence during these few years was one of unruffled calm. He was able to forget for a while the turmoils of the time, and to devote himself wholly to the study of perfection.

In one respect the life at St. Andrew's seems to have diverged from Benedict's prescriptions. The Roman monks appear to have devoted less time to manual labour than their brethren of Monte Cassino. One reason of this was that, being settled in a city, they had the fewer opportunities of outdoor work; another was that Gregory, by endowing the monastery, had in great measure freed the inhabitants from the necessity of toiling for their maintenance. For these causes the time allotted to manual work was probably diminished, and the hours of reading and meditation proportionately increased. Thus, in the case of Gregory himself, it seems likely that—though he would take his share in the duties of the house and garden—the greater part of his day was occupied with reading, meditation,

[1] *Ben. Reg.* 53.

and prayer, perhaps also with giving instruction to the novices and young monks. And it is highly probable that in the long quiet hours spent in his cell or in the library of the monastery, the future Doctor of the Latin Church laid the foundation of that profound knowledge of Holy Scripture for which he was afterwards conspicuous. Perhaps also he here acquired the habit of allegorical interpretation—a method of exegesis of which he was inordinately fond. Poring for days together over the pages of Holy Writ, the uncritical, imaginative monk would accustom himself to search out latent meanings and to wrest all manner of unsuspected lessons from the most unpromising word-material. It was an exercise of ingenuity which would naturally be attractive to a visionary; yet it must be confessed that this mystical method of interpretation is the principal cause of the weariness which besets a modern reader who ventures upon a prolonged study of Gregory's Commentaries.

Gregory was not content to stop short with those exercises "for beginners" which Benedict had ordained in his Rule; by additional austerities, fastings, and vigils, he aspired to the higher perfection. His asceticism was extreme. His fasts particularly were so rigorous and prolonged as seriously to injure his health, and to sow in him the seeds of diseases from which, for the remainder of his life, he was never wholly free.[1] His unregulated enthusiasm in this matter is illustrated by an anecdote in the *Dialogues*.[2] One year, towards the end of Lent, he tells us, he had become so weak and ill, that it seemed impossible that he could live unless he took nourishment frequently. "The Paschal Day was at hand. And when I found I could not fast on that most sacred sabbath—*i.e.* the Saturday before Easter—on which all people, even little children, fast, I began to sink more from sorrow than from weakness. But in my sorrow it suddenly occurred to me to take Eleutherius, the man of God, privately with me to the oratory, and to beg of him to obtain by his prayers from Almighty God that I might receive power to fast on that day. This I did. And so soon as we entered the oratory he began, at my humble request, to pray earnestly with tears. After a short time, his prayer ended, and he left the oratory. But when he pronounced the benediction

[1] Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* x. 1; Paul. Diac. *Vita* 5; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 7.
[2] *Dial.* iii. 33.

over me, my stomach at once received such strength that all thought of food and feeling of sickness utterly vanished; and I began to wonder what I was and what I had been, for even when I called to mind my weakness I could not recognize in myself any of the sensations I remembered. While I was occupied in the affairs of the monastery, I entirely forget my sickness; and if I did remember it I felt so strong that I wondered whether I had not really taken food. When evening came, my strength was such that, had I wished it, I could have continued fasting till the next day."

Gregory's ordinary diet consisted mainly of raw vegetables and fruit, which his mother Silvia used to send to him from Cella Nova on a silver dish—the last prized relic of the former grandeurs of the palace of Gordianus. The dainty patrician lady had renounced every luxury she once enjoyed, but she still kept back one piece of silver plate; and about this dish a legend was invented, which, though it properly refers to a later time when Gregory was abbat of his monastery, may for convenience be reported here. One day when Gregory was writing in his cell, one in the guise of a shipwrecked mariner appeared, and begged an alms. Twice did the saint supply his need; but when he returned the third time it was discovered that there was no more money in the house. Then, being reminded of his mother's silver dish, which had been sent that day with food, Gregory gladly presented it to the beggar, "that a poor man who asks to be comforted may not depart in sorrow." Of course, the supposed mariner turned out to be an angel in disguise, and from that time—says John the Deacon—Gregory became so renowned for his miracles and virtues that he was believed to govern his monastery not alone, but conjointly with the Apostle St. Andrew himself.[1]

Mention has been made above of the pious Eleutherius, whose prayers were so effectual for the Paschal fast. We hear of another saintly monk named Merulus, who was at this time one of Gregory's companions, and whose peculiar virtues seem to have made a deep impression on his mind. Of this man the following story is related: "There was in my monastery a monk named Merulus, who devoted himself with all earnestness to weeping and prayer. The words of the Psalms were

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 10.

almost always on his lips, except when he was taking food or sleeping. To him it appeared in a vision of the night that a crown of white flowers descended from heaven upon his head; and soon afterwards he fell ill and died in great peace and cheerfulness of mind. Fourteen years later, when Peter, the present abbat, wished to make for himself a grave near the grave of Merulus, there came from the latter, as he says, a sweet fragrance, as though all the odours of all the flowers were blended together there."[1]

The three years which Gregory spent as a monk in the Monastery of St. Andrew were always regarded by himself as the happiest of his life, and to them he afterwards looked back with unfeigned regret.[2] "When I was in the monastery," he writes,[3] "I could refrain my tongue from idle words and keep my mind almost continually in an attitude of prayer." Over and over again, when distracted with the care of the Churches and all the anxieties of his high office, the great Pope burst out into laments for the monastic peace and quiet that he had for ever lost. "I remember with sorrow," he cries in one typical passage,[4] "what I once was in the monastery, how I rose in contemplation above all changeable and decaying things, and thought of nothing but the things of heaven; how my soul, though pent within the body, soared beyond its fleshly prison, and looked with longing upon death itself as the means of entering into life. But now, by reason of my pastoral care, I have to bear with secular business, and, after so fair a vision of rest, am fouled with worldly dust. I ponder on what I now endure. I ponder on what I have lost. For lo! now am I shaken by the waves of a great sea, and the ship of the soul is dashed by the storms of a mighty tempest. And when I recall the condition of my former life, I sigh as one who looks back and gazes on the shore he has left behind."

It was well, however, that Gregory was not left to the undisturbed enjoyment of his quiet. Had his monastic life been prolonged for many years, his splendid energies might, not improbably, have been frittered away in unprofitable austerities and self-tormentings. Asceticism, as we have seen, had already obtained too strong a hold upon his mind. He was in a fair

[1] Greg. *Dial.* iv. 47.
[2] Greg. *Epp.* v. 53*a*.
[3] *Hom. in Ezech.* i. 11, § 6.
[4] Greg. *Dial.* Praef.

way, had he been left in his retreat, to become one of those saintly marvels, whose self-inflicted sufferings are the admiration of their time, but whose beneficial influence on the world at large is found to be insignificant. Fortunately for Rome and Italy, however, Gregory was withheld from this career. A higher destiny was in store for him. Before it was too late he was drawn from his hiding-place by a power which he dared not disobey, and thrown back, all reluctant, into the busy world of men.

Pope Benedict the First, who succeeded John in 574, had marked the career of this gifted man. Doubtless he had observed him when still Prefect, knew of his popularity with the people, remarked his upright conduct, his unwearied attention to business, his legal skill, sound judgment, and administrative ability; had shared, perhaps, in the universal astonishment when he resigned his wealth and became a monk; but kept his eye upon him all the more, noted his progress in piety and learning, his cheerful endurance of hardships, his profoundly religious character; and concluded in the end that such a one was likely to be of service to the Church. Pope Benedict the First was himself in no wise a remarkable man. On the contrary, he was one of those colourless figures of history, of whom little is remembered either good or bad. But in one case at least we have incontestable evidence of his shrewd sense and foresight and we honour him as the first Papal patron of one of the greatest of the Popes.

Sorely against his will, yet obedient to Benedict's command, Gregory quitted his beloved monastery, probably in the spring of 578, and was ordained "Seventh Deacon" of the Roman Church.[1] It has been suggested that the Seventh Deacon was identical with the Archdeacon, and that, inasmuch, as the

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 25. Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* x. 1, and Paul. Diac. *Vita* 7, do not give the name of the Pope, though Paul implies that it was Pelagius II. John is generally an inferior authority to Paul; but the fact that he deliberately corrects him here may imply that he possessed some further information on the point. The fact that there was some doubt as to the name of the Pope who ordained Gregory supports my contention that he was ordained in 578, since in that year both Benedict and Pelagius held the pontificate, and it might easily have been forgotten whether Gregory was promoted by Benedict early in the year, or by Pelagius in the later months. (I accept the date November, 578, as that of the election of Pelagius, though the chronology is by no means certain.)

latter office was generally regarded as an avenue to the Papacy,[1] Benedict actually intended that the humble young monk should one day succeed him in the chair of Peter. Proof of this suggested identification, however, is not forthcoming, and it seems improbable that Gregory should have been raised at once to so high a dignity as the theory would imply. It is best, therefore, to say simply that Gregory was appointed one of the seven eminent ecclesiastics who shared the counsels of the Pope, and were charged with the superintendence of the seven Regions of Rome. The nomination of an untried monk to a post of such distinction is sufficiently surprising, and we need not seek to exaggerate the honour.

Benedict himself did not long survive the elevation of his *protégé*. His pontificate had been a troubled one. Lombards, pestilence, and famine had decimated the population of Italy. Many towns had been captured by the enemy, and Rome itself had been threatened.[2] In 577 an embassy, headed by Pamphronius the Patrician, carried to Constantinople a tribute of three thousand pounds of gold, and an urgent request that succours might be sent. The Emperor good-naturedly gave them back the tribute, together with some sound advice, but could spare no troops.[3] In the next year, 578, Farwald, duke of Spoleto, laid siege to Rome. The plague was raging in the city, and a tremendous rainfall created a general conviction that the Deluge was returning. The citizens were crazed with terror. In the month of July Pope Benedict succumbed; and after a short interval, in the November of that year, Pelagius the Second was elected his successor and hurriedly consecrated, without waiting for the Emperor's confirmation of the election.[4]

The crisis was acute. Rome was most inadequately garrisoned. A handful of Byzantine troops, supported by a feeble city militia, was clearly insufficient to defend the place against the swarming Lombards. It seemed to Pelagius that,

[1] Eulogius Alexandr. ap. Photium, *Cod.* 182. Eulogius says that it was a law at Rome for the Archdeacon to succeed. But the instance which he gives is very questionable, and there is no satisfactory evidence of the existence of any such definite rule. See Bingham, ii. 21. 3.

[2] *Lib. Pont. Vita Benedicti I.*

[3] Menander *Hist.* c. 25 (ed. Bonn, p. 328).

[4] *Lib. Pont. Vita Pelagii II.*

unless reinforcements could be procured from the East, Rome must certainly be lost. He therefore determined to make one more attempt to move the Emperor. He despatched another embassy, consisting of prominent senators and ecclesiastics, to present his case;[1] and with them, he sent as his apocrisiarius, or permanent ambassador at the court of Byzantium, none other than Gregory himself.[2]

It was, it seems probable, early in the spring of 579 that Gregory—the Prefect, the Monk, the Seventh Deacon, and now the Papal Apocrisiarius—set forth in company with the special embassy on his journey to the Bosphorus. Six years were destined to elapse before he would once again set eyes upon the hills of Rome.

[1] Menander *Hist.* c. 29 (ed. Bonn, p. 331).

[2] Paul. Diac. *Vita* 7; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 26. Du Cange defines the title: "Nuntius, Legatus . . . praesertim qui a pontifice Romano vel etiam ab archiepiscopis ad comitatum mittebantur, quo res ecclesiarum suarum peragerent, et de iis ad principem referrent." Hincmar asserts that apocrisiarii were instituted when Constantine removed the seat of Empire from Rome to Constantinople, from which time agents (*responsales*) of Rome were maintained at the Imperial court. This authority, however, is too late to be trustworthy on the point. So far as our evidence goes, it seems to show that Agapetus was the first Pope who maintained a permanent apocrisiarius at Constantinople.

CHAPTER VI

GREGORY AT CONSTANTINOPLE

Let us in fancy accompany the Nuncio as he makes his entrance into the strange and gorgeous city of the Emperors of the East—the centre of the civilized world in the sixth century.

After receiving his letters of appointment, Gregory probably travelled by sea to Durazzo, whence he would post along the Egnatian Road, passing on his route the cities of Thessalonica, Heraclea and Selymbria, and arriving at length before the Golden Gate of Theodosius the Great. Here the great road from the West entered the walls of the Imperial city. And here, beneath the triple-arched marble gateway Gregory would find awaiting him the court functionaries whose duty it was to extend an official welcome to ambassadors and escort them to their residence.

From the Gate of Theodosius broad, colonnaded streets stretched away in an easterly direction, for a distance of between two and three miles, to the Augusteum, or Place Impériale—the noble piazza around which clustered the principal buildings of the city, and which, like the Forum of Old Rome, was the centre of all its restless life. But before he reached this Gregory would pass beneath the old Golden Gate of Constantine, would traverse three Fora (Bovis, Amastrianorum, and Tauri), and cross the Agora of Constantine, with its surrounding porticoes and multitude of statues. Here, perhaps, he would pause for a moment to gaze on the porphyry Column of Constantine and its engraved dedication, "O Christ, Master and Ruler of the world, to Thee have I consecrated this obedient city, and this sceptre and the power of Rome. Guard Thou it, and deliver it from every harm." The column, when

Gregory first beheld it in 579, still bore upon its summit the bronze Apollo of Phidias, with the Emperor's effigy, though the lance and globe which the figure had once grasped in its hands had been shaken away by earthquakes. During his six years' sojourn in Constantinople, the Papal Nuncio must have become familiar with the monument of the city's founder. For hither on every first day of September he would repair in state with the Emperor and the whole Court, to attend the annual service of thanksgiving, when hymns of joy were chanted round the column, and from a window in the chapel built against it a bishop intoned a special prayer.

Quitting the Agora of Constantine, Gregory would pass along the Mese, or Middle Street, the main thoroughfare of Constantinople, crowded with loungers and lined with splendid shops, and so emerge at last into the Augusteum.[1] He would now find himself standing in the midst of an open rectangular space, 1000 feet long by 300 feet broad, paved with marble and bounded by stately buildings. On the north was uplifted in superb majesty the domed splendour of the Church of St. Sophia. The eastern and southern sides were enclosed by the Senate House, the Baths of Zeuxippus, and the Great Palace with its dependencies. Westwards of the Palace lay the gigantic Hippodrome. And at the north-west corner of the Augusteum, on a piece of rising ground, was the Milion—an open building, which marked the point from which all distances were measured, and which constituted the goal of all the Imperial roads.

The most notable structure in Constantinople, and indeed in the whole Christian world of the sixth century, was the splendid Church of St. Sophia—"a great and incomparable work," says Evagrius, "hitherto unparalleled in history, the Church's greatest temple, fair and surpassing beyond the power of words to describe."[2] The beauty of this building, called by Sir John Mandeville "the fairest church in all the world," gave force and meaning to Justinian's boast, "I have vanquished thee, O Solomon." It measured 241 feet in length and 224 in breadth, and the huge dome soared grandly aloft, 180 feet above the grey veined marble pavement. The exquisite proportion and finished perfection of the edifice has been the subject of universal

[1] Procop. *De Aed.* i. 2.

[2] Evagr. *Hist.* iv. 30.

eulogy. Procopius, for instance, the historian of Byzantine buildings, speaks of it in the following terms:[1] "The church presents a most glorious spectacle, extraordinary to those who behold it, and altogether incredible to those who are told of it. In height it rises to the very heavens and overtops the neighbouring buildings like a ship anchored among them, appearing above the rest of the city, while it adorns and forms a part of it. One of its beauties is that, though growing out of the city as a part, it rises so high that the whole city can be seen as from a watch-tower. The length and breadth are so judiciously arranged, that it appears to be both long and wide without being disproportionate. It is distinguished by indescribable beauty, excelling both in its size and in the harmony of its measures, having no part excessive and none deficient; being more magnificent than ordinary buildings and much more elegant than those which are not of so just a proportion." The great dome, the peculiar glory of the church, was supported by two semi-domes and by four supplementary semi-domes; and the effect produced was one alike of astonishing vastness and of perfectly balanced harmony of arrangement. "All the parts," says Procopius, "surprisingly joined to one another in the air, suspended one from another, and resting only on that which is next them, form the work into one admirably harmonious whole, which spectators do not dwell upon for long in the mass, as each individual part attracts the eye to itself. The sight causes men constantly to change their point of view, and the spectator can nowhere point to any part which he admires more than the rest." In the nave, on the right and left, were stately and beautiful columns, "wrought of Thessalian stone," the spoils of classic buildings; and the whole interior was ablaze with glittering mosaic and many-tinted flash of marbles, "like a meadow full of flowers in bloom." Finally the lighting was wonderfully arranged. "The church," declares Procopius, "is singularly full of light and sunshine; you would declare that the place is not lighted by the sun without, but the rays are produced within itself, so abundant is the light that is poured in." And the enthusiastic author brings his whole description to an end with these words: "Whoever enters this church to worship perceives at once that

[1] Procop. *De Aed.* i. 1 (transl. in Lethaby and Swainson *Sancta Sophia* p. 24, *sqq.*).

it is not by any human strength or skill, but by the favour of God that this work has been perfected; the mind rises sublime to commune with God, feeling that He cannot be far off, but must especially love to dwell in the place which He has chosen;[1] and this is felt not only when a man sees it for the first time, but it always makes the same impression upon him, as though he had never seen it before. No one ever became weary of the spectacle, but those who are in the church delight in what they see, and when they leave they magnify it in their talk."

This splendid monument of the genius of Anthemius—the Giotto of the age of Justinian—can scarcely have failed to make a deep impression on the mind of Gregory. Never before had he beheld magnificence such as this. We can imagine him gazing in stupefaction into the airy firmament of the dome; or letting his eyes be dazzled by the sheen of the glistening marbles—the green Carystian, the red-and-silver Phrygian, porphyry "powdered with bright stars," Lydian "of crocus-colour glittering like gold," emerald-green from Sparta, stone "showing slanting streaks, blood-red and livid white," and other that had the semblance of "blue corn-flowers in grass with here and there a drift of fallen snow[2];"—or perhaps regarding wonderingly the mighty arches, the hundred columns with their varied capitals, the sanctuary which contained no less than forty thousand pounds' weight of silver; or examining with admiration the solid golden altar, and the ambo with its costly decoration of gems and precious stones; or losing himself amid those spacious galleries and cloisters, which, with their stately grace, enhanced the dignity of the building. Marvellous as it was, however, this splendour would be likely to alarm rather than to attract the Papal Nuncio. He would doubtless discern in it a type and symbol of the power and pompous grandeur of the Constantinopolitan Church, whose bishops,

[1] Cf. Const. Manasses *Compend. Chron.* 3267, *sqq.*—

οὗτος ναὸν ἐδείματο τὸν φερανγῆ τὸν μέγαν,
τὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ μου τέμενος, τὸν οὐρανὸν τὸν κάτω,
ὃν οἶμαι καὶ τὰ σεραφὶμ αἰδούμενα θαυμάζει.
ἄν γὰρ Θεὸς καταξιοῖ μένειν ἐν χειροκμήτοις,
ἐν τούτῳ πάντως κατοικεῖ· καὶ ποῦ γὰρ ἀλλαχόθι;

[2] Paulus Silentiarius *Descript. S. Sophiae* v. 617, *sqq.*

supported by the Emperors, were becoming inveterate rivals of the Patriarchs of the West. Hence he would have but little love for the place, bound up as it was with unpleasant memories, and seeming by its very richness and greatness to hold out a menace of worse to come. Probably he rarely came here, save on high festivals, when the Court attended in state, or when perhaps the Patriarch, by way of compliment, invited him to serve in the celebration of the Holy Mysteries.

Leaving the church and pursuing his way in a southerly direction along the eastern side of the Augusteum, the traveller would pass by three fine buildings, separated from the wall of the Emperor's Palace by a long portico called the Passage of Achilles. The first of these buildings, that nearest St. Sophia, was the Palace of the Patriarch, containing the famous Thomaites, or hall of audience, in which was stored the patriarchal library with all the important documents of councils and synods. South of the edifice, and linked to it by a colonnade, was the Senate House[1]; and beyond the Senate House were the Baths of Zeuxippus. It seems that in Constantinople the baths were a far less prominent feature in the city life than they had once been in that of Old Rome; nevertheless, even in Constantinople they served as club-houses and agreeable places of popular resort. The luxurious Baths of Zeuxippus were at once the most fashionable and the most beautiful in the city. They had once contained a priceless collection of treasures of art, brought together by Constantine from the cities of Greece and Asia, and including, among other renowned pieces of statuary, the Athene of Lyndus, the Amphitrite of Rhodes, and the Pan consecrated by the Greeks after the defeat of Xerxes. These, however, were all destroyed in the Nika fire; and although Justinian rebuilt the baths on a sumptuous scale, with lavish decoration of marbles and statues, yet the master-pieces of the Greeks could never be replaced.[2]

Behind these three buildings, bounding the Augusteum on the east and south, sprawled out the Imperial Palace. This mighty mass of architecture, begun by Constantine and enlarged and embellished by Justinian, consisted partly of isolated and disconnected palaces—such as the Chalke, or bronze-roofed palace of Zeno, and the Porphyry Palace with its pyramidal

[1] Procop. *De Aed.* i. 10.

[2] See Cedrenus, vol. i. p. 648.

roof and red porphyry casing of walls and floor;—partly of palaces connected with one another by covered passages, so as to form practically one architectural whole, to which the name of "the Palace" was given. Of these buildings particular reference need here be made only to the Chrysotriklinon, or Golden Hall, erected by Justin the Second some eight years before Gregory arrived at Constantinople. In this splendid presence-chamber the Emperors held their state receptions, and on such occasions the scene must have been one of unsurpassed magnificence. The porticoes and passages were lined with guards whose bodies were covered with gold, and who carried gilded spears and bucklers. Behind the massive silver doors, in an atmosphere heavy with the reek of incense, there struggled and seethed the wealth and rank and fashion of Byzantium. All the *élite* of society would be there to offer grovelling homage to the "divine" Emperor—hard-faced officials robed in rustling silks, with shoes and waist-belts curiously wrought in gold; portly prelates in rich vestments with jewelled crosses; aristocratic fops brimful of foreign affectations, with beards trimmed *more Persico*, and hair close-shaven in front and flowing behind, after the fashion of the Huns; stalwart generals; gouty millionaires, abbats, foreign ambassadors, and, perhaps, some great ladies, whose rouged complexions, yellow-dyed hair, and innumerable golden ornaments, proved that the exhortations of St. Chrysostom had been in vain. In the midst of the throng the Emperor sat on a golden throne beneath a canopy supported by four columns. He wore an embroidered tunic of white silk, red buskins, and the purple chlamys of empire; on his head was a diadem ablaze with jewels. With sublime indifference he looked on while the courtiers in turn prostrated themselves before him—a gorgeous, impassive idol, sorely wearied by his worshippers. Beyond the hall of audience the ante-rooms and galleries were dense with a shifting multitude of minor officials, barbarian servants, eunuchs, monks, and men-at-arms; and outside the courts were blocked with the beautiful litters and chariots, and the white gold-harnessed mules of the exalted personages within. In this brilliant scene our simple monk from St. Andrew's must often have participated, feeling, no doubt, most strange and out of place amid the luxury and display of this most splendid of all courts.

West of the Palace lay the Hippodrome—"the pivot (it has been called) round which revolved all the Byzantine world." It was the theatre at once of the amusements and the politics of Constantinople, and the scene of many of the most stirring events of the time. According to a modern estimate, the Hippodrome occupied an area of rather more than twelve acres, and was capable of accommodating as many as eighty thousand spectators. At the northern end was the kathisma, the large box with several hundred seats, appropriated to the use of the Emperor; underneath which were the mangana, or porticoes in which the horses and chariots were kept. On either side of the kathisma was an entrance—that on the right being the Gate of the Blue Faction, the left the Gate of the Greens. The two remaining entrances were called, respectively, the Gate of Decimus and the Dead Gate. The southern end of the Hippodrome was crescent-shaped, and this, together with the two sides, rose up in a solid mass of benches, galleries, and staircases, finely designed and finished off with elegant carvings. On the top of the tiers, raised to a height of forty feet above the ground, a magnificent, marble-railed promenade, 2766 feet in length, stretched away under the shadow of enormous awnings. In the midst of the arena itself were three antique memorials—the obelisk brought by Theodosius from Heliopolis, resting on a pedestal of marble and granite, adorned with fourth-century reliefs; the Serpent Column of Delphi, with the names of the patriot cities who fought at Plataea inscribed on the wreathing brazen coils; and the square Colossus, towering half as high again as the obelisk, and covered with bronze plates. But, in addition to these curiosities, the sides and ends of the theatre were adorned with a bewildering variety of statues—some of enormous proportions, some grotesque, some of perfect symmetry chiselled by the masters of antiquity—and in such quantity that a writer of the twelfth century informs us that there were as many heroes, emperors, and gods along the seats of the Hippodrome as living men. Along the outer eastern wall again were more statues, and several small chapels.

South of the Hippodrome, in the quarter of Hormisdas, close to Julian's Harbour on the Sea of Marmora, stood a building which the historian of Gregory ought not to pass over without mention. This was the Church of SS. Sergius and Bacchus, the

two soldier-saints who were martyred under Maximian. It was square-shaped, with a dome and a small apse lighted by six windows. Procopius describes it as "reflecting the rays of the sun from its glittering polished marbles," and as being "covered with a wealth of gold and filled with offerings."[1] In quaint, half-jesting allusion to the name of St. Bacchus, the freize and some of the capitals were decorated with vine-leaves. Within this place the representatives of the Latin Church were permitted to use their own familiar rite, and it was here, therefore, that Gregory, so long as he remained at court, was accustomed to worship.

We now return to the Hippodrome, and mounting up behind the benches on to the grand promenade, we take a bird's-eye view of the fairest, the richest, and the most civilized city in the sixth-century world. Stretched out upon her seven hills, Constantinople lies before us—a bewildering maze of gorgeous palaces and churches, of convents, baths, gymnasia, and hospitals. We look on splendid marble-paved piazzas, adorned with classic columns and precious statuary; on streets shaded by graceful colonnades, and alive with jostling throngs of every nation under heaven; on markets full of chattering Greek merchants and swarthy Alexandrine Jews; on sculptured porticoes and public halls; on the entrances of the subterranean cisterns, where the imagination pictures dark waters and hundreds of marble columns, dimly discernible by the flare of the explorer's torch; on harbours, lines of aqueduct, and long perspective of lofty walls. The eye is dazzled with the gleam of burnished plates that roof the palaces of the Emperor and the great Byzantine lords, or cover the rising domes and semi-domes of churches. The city seems all lustrous with a glory of gold and brass and marbles. Beyond it the blue waters of the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmora shimmer in the sunlight, and the narrow Golden Horn crowded with foreign shipping; further off we catch a glimpse of the trading settlements of Pera and Galata, and the fashionable suburb of Chalcedon, where the gouty nobles have their summer villas and shady gardens; and in the background stretch away the Arganthonius Mountains and the snow-clad peaks of Bithynian Olympus. It is a veritable city of enchantment, this Constantinople—a city of

[1] Procop. *De Aed.* i. 4.

which the beauty (says Themistius) covers the whole area "like a robe woven to the very fringe." And scarcely can we conceive a greater contrast than that between this new Eastern capital, with all its glittering loveliness and abounding wealth, and the ancient seat of empire now falling slowly into ruin on the banks of the Tiber.

The city was a very busy one, an active industrial centre. Fleets of merchant vessels from every quarter in the world came to anchorage in the Golden Horn, and the streets were always thronged with foreign traders. Large manufactures, too, were carried on of silk, pottery, mosaic, jewel-work, and war-engines. As in Alexandria during the reign of Hadrian, so in the Constantinople of Justinian, "no one was permitted to live in idleness." Any stranger found within the city, who was neither gaining a livelihood by trade or profession, nor engaged in a law-suit, was expelled by the quaestor; and any able-bodied citizen who refused to work was likewise banished. Constantinople gave no harbourage to loafers.

The city, again, was exceedingly wealthy. The palaces of the millionaires were dwellings fit for the gods—enormous mansions, with private baths, porticoes, walking-alleys, and gardens. The apartments were decorated with an extravagant if somewhat ponderous magnificence. The walls were encrusted with multi-coloured marbles or covered with plates of gold, sometimes inlaid with precious stones. The doors were of ivory; the beams and ceilings were gilded; the pillars of the domed halls were of marble with gilded chapiters. The floors were covered with rich carpets, and round the walls was a profusion of priceless statuary, pictures, and mosaics. The benches and chairs were made of ivory, the tables were frequently bordered with silver, and even the meanest vessels were of precious metal. Battalions of servants were attached to such palaces—perfumers, cooks, footmen, eunuchs, barbers, cupbearers, musicians—generally young barbarians of great personal beauty and magnificently dressed, with collars and bracelets of gold. Chrysostom says that in his time some of the wealthy men had as many as a thousand or even two thousand retainers. The entertainments and banquets given in these marble halls were on the same extravagant scale, and the gourmands of Constantinople, though perhaps less prodigal than the Luculli

and Hortensii of Old Rome, were dissatisfied unless the rarest delicacies were served for their enjoyment—"wonderful strange birds, fish from distant seas, fruits out of season, summer snows and winter roses." These sumptuous establishments belonged, of course, only to the wealthy; but they served as models, which every householder in Constantinople sought to imitate, more or less, according to his means.

The tone of society was not high. The upper classes were selfish and luxurious, destitute alike of moral principle and of sincere religious conviction. The old aristocracy of birth had died out, and in its place had arisen an exclusive official bureaucracy, the members of which were the creatures of the Emperor, to whom they were bound by ties of interest. These official lords passed their lives in plotting and counter-plotting for places and precedence. There was no form of servility or personal degradation to which they would not stoop to enrich themselves or conciliate the Emperor's favour. Avarice and a corrupt ambition were the motives of their activity; and their leisure was generally spent in gluttony, gambling, and indulgence in the grossest pleasures.[1] The greatest attention was paid to etiquette. Ranks were defined with scrupulous exactness, and, as at the court of Louis XIV., prodigious energy was wasted in settling minute points of ceremonial, and disputing over rules of precedence and empty high-sounding titles. The great dames of the capital took example by their husbands. They were frivolous, fond of luxury and splendour, lovers of pasquinades and scandalous stories, and given to meddling in the affairs of Church and State. They filled their drawing-rooms with fawning priests and eunuchs, and pursued their political intrigues not less passionately than their private liaisons. Their morals, in general, would not bear close scrutiny; sexual immorality was common, as also was the use of drugs to procure abortion; and we have several instances of cold-blooded treachery on the part of great ladies towards those who trusted them, and of deliberate, calculating cruelty towards those who were in their power.

[1] Justinian had done his best to crush out at least unnatural vice (Joh. Malalas, p. 436; Cedrenus, vol. i. pp. 645, 646; Zonaras, vol. iii. pp. 158, 159). But the picture which Procopius draws of Byzantine society is black enough. See the *Hist. Arcana*, *passim*, and compare John Lydus's description of the orgies of John of Cappadocia (*De Magistrat.* iii. 62, 64, 65).

A similar levity and lubricity characterized the Byzantine populace. Impatient of control, fiercely partisan, regardless of everything in moments of fury, it was at all times a source of grave anxiety to the Government. It was divided into two irreconcilable factions—the Blues, who were conservative, loyal, and orthodox; and the Greens, who were radicals in politics, and inclined to heresy in religion. Each faction hated the other; and though on rare occasions they united against the authorities, yet the coalition never lasted, and the old feud broke out with greater vehemence than ever. The famous sedition of 532, in which the most beautiful buildings in Constantinople were destroyed by fire, and more than thirty thousand lives were lost, illustrates the danger to which the city was exposed when the lawless passions of the mob were really roused.[1] And though it is true that such an outbreak was exceptional, and that the people could be usually restrained by liberal doles and free amusements, yet there was no depending on their good behaviour. Frequent faction-fights are reported by historians. We read, too, of many very curious scenes enacted in the Hippodrome. Here even the great Justinian was howled down with shrieks, "Thou liest! Silence, donkey!" In the time of the Emperor Maurice, the mob dressed up a negro-slave who chanced to bear some resemblance to the sovereign, crowned him with garlic, and led him about seated on an ass, crying with yells of derisive laughter, "See, Maurice, see how you look!" Phocas again tried to conciliate the people by scattering handfuls of gold from the kathisma; but they only gathered up the pieces while they loaded the donor with insults and obscenities. The unbridled insolence and strange freedom of the Byzantine mob is a very remarkable feature of the life of the city, and one which should be taken into full account in forming an estimate of the domestic policy of the Emperors.

As in the old Rome, so in the new, the popular cry was for "panem et circenses." The Emperors responded with free doles of bread and oil and wine, and with a constant succession of spectacles and pageants. The enthusiasm for the latter among all classes in Constantinople was extraordinary. Not only the

[1] Procop. *Bell. Pers.* i. 24; Malalas, p. 473, *sqq.*; *Chron. Pasch.* p. 620, *sqq.*; Theophanes *A. M.* 6024.

people, but the nobles, the clergy, even the patriarchs, were passionately addicted to them. The Hippodrome and the various theatres of the city were always filled with eager crowds, and on special occasions hundreds would take their places on the night before, in order to make sure of an uninterrupted view. The performances thus sought after were of various kinds. Besides the horse-races in the Hippodrome, there were beast-baitings, ballets, and dramatic representations, frequently of an extremely immodest character. Rope-dancing was a favourite attraction. The ropes were fastened slanting fashion, so that there was no walking upon them save by ascending or descending; and sometimes the acrobats, after walking upon the rope, would lay themselves down upon it, strip as though they were going to bed, and then dress again—"a spectacle from which some turned away their eyes, and which made others tremble at the sight of so perilous a performance." Other performers again gave wonderful exhibitions of flying through the air; others balanced poles upon their foreheads; others flung up naked swords in quick succession, and caught them by their handles as they fell; others gave shows of trained animals, of dancing bears, learned monkeys, and wise dogs.[1] Anything novel was always sure to attract an enormous crowd, and the more indecent the spectacle the greater, seemingly, was the applause.

In addition to the performances in the Hippodrome and theatres, the people were amused with frequent *fêtes* and gorgeous public ceremonies. Perhaps the most popular of these were the military pageants. The impressionable Greek mob loved to gaze on the evolutions of the Imperial troops, admired the stalwart beauty of the barbarian soldiers, and copied their military fashions. But if the military reviews

[1] Several historians mention a wise dog (*ξανθὸν καὶ τυφλόν*, Theoph. 6036) which was brought *ἐκ τῶν* 'Ιταλῶν *χώρας* in Justinian's reign, by a certain *κωμοδρόμος* named Andrew, and was said to possess *πνεῦμα Πύθωνος*. For instance, Zonaras, vol. iii. p. 158, gives the following account of this animal: *'Ιστορεῖται δὲ τις τότε τῷ Βυζαντίῳ ἐπιδημῆσαι ἔλκων κύνα τερατουργόν· πολλῶν γὰρ εἰς θέαν αὐτοῦ συνηγμένων, ἐδίδουν πλείους ἐκ τούτων τοὺς ἑαυτῶν δακτυλίους, καὶ πάντες ὁμοῦ πρὸ τοῦ κυνὸς κατετίθεντο. ὁ δ' ἐκελεύετο πρὸς τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ ἑκάστῳ παρεσχηκέναι τὸν ἴδιον, καὶ τῷ στόματι λαμβάνων αὐτοὺς καθ' ἕνα ἀπλανῶς ἑκάστῳ τὸν οἰκεῖον προσένεμε. Καὶ αὖθις προσετάττετο δεῖξαι τίς μὲν εὔπορος ἦν, τίς δὲ πένης ἢ τίς πόρνη τῶν γυναικῶν ἢ ποία χήρα, τίς δὲ συνεζευγμένη ἀνδρί, καὶ ἕτερα τοιαῦτα, καὶ πάντα ἐδείκνυεν ἀνεπισφαλῶς, ἑκάστου πρὸς τὸ ἐρώτημα τὸ ἱμάτιον κατέχων τῷ στόματι.*

were thought delightful, the ecclesiastical celebrations pleased scarcely less. Whenever the Emperor assisted in a solemn procession of relics by torchlight, or attended the annual service of thanksgiving at Constantine's Column, or went in state to the Church of the Virgin at Blachernae to adore the holy robe of Mary, and afterwards, himself clad in a gilded tunic, bathed in the sacred fountain, the streets and squares of Constantinople were almost impassable with the dense, excited throngs.

As in the days of Gregory Nazianzen, the people took the liveliest interest in all matters ecclesiastical. Every man was a theologian. The carpenter at his lathe, and the cobbler at his last, argued with heat the dogmatic questions of the hour. Logical combats between Catholics and Monophysites were a favourite form of entertainment, and the deliberations of councils and synods were followed with breathless interest by the masses. At the same time, the Christianity alike of the aristocracy and of the people was little more than a veneer; only, while in the case of the former it served to cover a pagan infidelity, in the case of the latter it concealed, in very imperfect fashion, a pagan superstition. Soothsayers, magicians, and fortune-tellers were in great request; auguries were religiously observed; all kinds of heathen customs connected with marriage or the birth of children still survived; the use of charms and amulets was almost universal. And the Church, which had originally endeavoured to combat superstition, had ended by itself becoming infected with the all-pervading heathenism.

Since the death of Justinian society had become anarchical. The absolute power of the Emperor had declined, while the power of a rapacious aristocracy had increased. Three great classes—the aristocracy, the army, the people—struggled for pre-eminence, and the Emperor, instead of holding all alike in subjection to himself, was forced to give support and countenance now to one and now to another, in order to maintain his tottering authority. Tiberius, for example, favoured the people against the aristocracy; while Maurice endeavoured to use the aristocracy to render the army an efficient instrument of his will—which instrument he seems to have intended afterwards to turn against the aristocracy itself. Thus class was in conflict with class, interest with interest; the various elements in society

were at war with one another, and there existed no common sentiment of patriotism or loyalty which might serve as the basis for a reconciliation.

When Gregory passed through the Golden Gate in 579, the Emperor Justin was dead, and the tall, grey-eyed, yellow-haired Tiberius had succeeded to the purple.[1] Of this man all the historians, both Greek and Latin, speak in the highest terms; and certainly his disposition and character contrasted favourably with that of his predecessor. Gentle, compassionate, generous, and brave, gifted with personal beauty and engaging manners, Tiberius found no difficulty in conciliating the love of all classes of his subjects. His popularity was unbounded. The army admired his military abilities, as displayed in his conduct of the war in the East. The Catholics respected him as "a great and true Christian."[2] The people were won by his open-handed generosity. It was said of him that he valued more than all things else the prosperity of his subjects,[3] and that the gold which was scraped together with suffering and tears appeared to him debased.[4] The late Emperor Justin had laboured under the imputation of avarice; Tiberius, by way of contrast, ran into the opposite extreme of reckless expenditure. The farmers and landed proprietors were granted a remission of a year's tribute; the soldiers were conciliated by large and frequent Augustatica; princely donations were made to physicians, jurists, and the other professional classes. As Evagrius puts it,[5] Tiberius in his almsgiving considered not so much what the needy ought to receive, as what it became an Emperor to bestow. A tale was current that the Empress Sophia, the wife of Justin, once remonstrated with Tiberius on the subject of his extravagance. "The treasure which I took years to accumulate," said the Empress, "you are scattering in a moment." But Tiberius

[1] The following picture of Tiberius is given us by Cedrenus, vol. i. p. 688: Ἦν δὲ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀναδρομὴν τέλειος, εὔστηθος, εὐόμματός τε καὶ ὀλίγον ὑπόγλαυκος, ξανθὴν ἔχων τὴν τρίχα τῆς κεφαλῆς καὶ τὸ γένειον, λευκὸς τὴν χροιὰν καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ἀνθηρός, ἀγαθὸς καὶ μεγαλόψυχος εἰς ὑπερβολήν.

[2] Greg. Tur. *H. F.* iv. 39, describes Tiberius as "hominem iustum, eleemosynarium, aequum, discernentem, obtinentemque victorias, et, quod omnibus supereminet bonis, etiam verissimum Christianum." Cf. Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 11, 15.

[3] Theophylact *Hist.* iii. 16.

[4] Evagr. *Hist.* v. 11.

[5] *Ibid.* v. 11.

said, "Our treasury will never be empty so long as the poor receive alms and the captives are redeemed. For this is the great treasure, as our Lord says, *Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven.*" A piety so much to the advantage of the people could not fail to meet with its reward—if not in fact, at least in popular gossip. One day, the story goes, Tiberius was walking through his palace, when he observed in the pavement a marble slab graven with a cross. The Emperor cried, "We fortify our brow and breast with the Lord's cross, and yet here are we treading it underfoot." He ordered the slab to be removed; but when it was taken up another similarly marked was found beneath it, and a third beneath that. Under the last was discovered a great treasure, which enabled the Emperor to be yet more bountiful in his gifts to the poor.[1]

Tiberius was a thoroughly amiable man; but our evidence seems to show that he was a feeble statesman. His profuse liberality, which brought the Empire almost to the verge of bankruptcy and occasioned the most serious embarrassment to his successor Maurice, was but an indication of his general weakness. He had not the vigour of character that was requisite to check the forces of dissolution which were sapping the life of the Empire. The most that he could do was to patch things up for a time. Theophylact[2] relates that an angel once appeared in a dream to Tiberius, and revealed to him that, as a reward for his virtues, the days of anarchy should be postponed until after his death. And the anecdote well illustrates the extent of the Emperor's capacity to avert the disaster which threatened the Roman world. He could postpone the evil day—that was all.

Tiberius, however, did a service to the Empire when he laid himself out to strengthen the army. He spent large sums, Theophylact tells us, in collecting troops.[3] He enrolled, says Theophanes, a corps of fifteen thousand slaves, which he placed under the command of Maurice the Cappadocian, giving him the

[1] Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* v. 20. Cedrenus, vol. i. pp. 672–674, has a very curious story to illustrate the truth that what is given to the poor will be repaid a hundredfold. For another anecdote directed against avarice, see *ibid.* pp. 671, 672.

[2] Theophylact *Hist.* i. 2; cf. Cedrenus, vol. i. p. 689.

[3] Theophylact *Hist.* iii. 12.

title of "Count of the Federates."[1] He seems to have contemplated extensive reforms in matters of military discipline and administration; and, so far as the war in the East was concerned, he displayed real vigour and ability. "To him," writes Menander,[2] "the Persian War was everything, and to that he devoted his whole strength." The Western provinces, on the other hand, were abandoned to their fate. Hordes of tall, blond Slaves were allowed to overrun Thrace, Illyricum, and Northern Greece, and in Italy the inroads of the Lombards were entirely unchecked. When Pamphronius came from Rome with the tribute and an urgent request for succour, Tiberius (then Caesar) would do no more than return the money to the envoy, with the advice "that he should, if possible, induce some of the Lombard chiefs, by the hope of gain, to pass over with their forces to the side of the Romans, to abstain from troubling Italy any more, and to help the Romans in the war in the East. But if the Lombards, as was likely to be the case, rejected his proposals, he should take a different course, and gain the assistance of some of the Frank chiefs by gifts of money, and so weaken and break the power of the Lombards."[3]

When Gregory reached Constantinople, his first act naturally was to present himself, in company with the other members of the second embassy, before this easy-tempered Emperor, and endeavour once more to persuade him to come to the relief of Italy. The ambassadors were kindly received, and their mission was not entirely without result. "At that time," writes the contemporary historian Menander,[4] "the war with the Persians in Armenia and throughout the East, so far from being completed, was becoming more and more serious. The Emperor could not therefore send to Italy a force sufficient for its requirements. Nevertheless, he collected and sent such troops as he could, and for the rest he earnestly endeavoured to win over to his side some of the Lombard chiefs with promises of great rewards. And in consequence of his overtures several of them actually did pass over to the side of the Romans."[5] Such was the effect of the embassy of Pelagius. When they

[1] Theophanes *Chron. A. M.* 6074; Cedrenus, vol. i. p. 690.

[2] Menander *Hist.* 25 (ed. Bonn. p. 328). [3] *Ibid.* 25. [4] *Ibid.* 29.

[5] *E.g.* Droctulph, a Suavian by birth, who had been brought up among the Lombards, and had obtained by his valour the title and position of duke. For him, see Paul. *Hist. Lang.* iii. 18, 19.

found that nothing more was to be obtained, the envoys returned home, leaving Gregory behind in the Imperial city to watch the interests of the Pope and Italy.

So far as he could consistently with the discharge of his official duties, Gregory endeavoured to continue at the Byzantine court the simple habits of monastic life. The splendour and luxury by which he was surrounded had for him no attractions. The magnificent official functions in the Golden Hall—the pomp, the ceremonial, the etiquette—were all inexpressibly irksome. He was disgusted with the intrigue and petty jealousy of the courtiers, with the restless ambition of the great lords. The noise and glare and bustle of the world's greatest city stunned and sickened him, and he pined for the quiet and seclusion of the palace of Gordianus. A monk by deliberate choice, he found his peace and greatest happiness in carrying out the duties enjoined in the monastic rule. Hence, though compelled to reside in the most brilliant of courts, he preserved, as far as possible, the usage of the cloister, and lived in the gay world as one who was not of it.[1] This was rendered easier for him by the circumstance that several of the monks of St. Andrew's had accompanied him to Constantinople. "I see," wrote Gregory in after-times,[2] "that this was ordered for me by Divine Providence, that when I was driven to and fro by the constant buffeting of worldly business, I might by their example be anchored, as it were, to the firm shore of prayer. To their society I fled as to a harbour of perfect safety, and while I was employed with them in the careful study and discussion of Scripture, the yearnings of penitence daily gave me life." One result of these Scriptural meditations was the composition and delivery of a series of lectures on the Book of Job, which were afterwards revised and edited, and are still extant under the title of *Magna Moralia*.[3] This important work, a storehouse of sixth-century theology and morals, will be referred to more at length in a succeeding chapter. Here we need only remark the power of detachment which enabled Gregory, in the midst of his multifarious official business, to attempt and to carry through so great an undertaking.

[1] Baeda *Hist. Eccl.* ii. 1; Paul. Diac. *Vita* 7; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 26.
[2] Greg. *Epp.* v. 53*a*, § 1.
[3] Baeda *H. E.* ii. 1; Paul. Diac. *Vita* 8; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 27.

The little community in the quarter of Hormisdas was at one time reinforced by a party of old friends from St. Andrew's Monastery.[1] At their head was the abbat himself, one Maximianus, who will be heard of again as bishop of Syracuse. This good man, having once reached Constantinople, was in no hurry to leave it, but settled down with his brethren, apparently not intending to return until Gregory himself should be recalled. After one or two years, however, he was summoned by Pope Pelagius to resume the superintendence of his neglected house, and with great reluctance he set sail for Italy. The circumstances of his voyage, believed at the time to be miraculous, are narrated by Gregory in his *Dialogues*.[2] It seems that the ship containing the monks was overtaken in the Adriatic by a violent tempest. The sails and mast were blown overboard, and the hold filled with water, which reached at last the planks of the upper deck. The sailors and passengers abandoned all hope, gave one another the kiss of peace, received the Eucharist, and commended their souls to God. But strangely enough, though the hold was full of water, the vessel kept afloat for eight days, and on the ninth put into the harbour of Crotona. Here all disembarked unhurt. Maximianus was the last to leave the ship; and the moment after he had set his foot on land the vessel sank.

The period of Gregory's sojourn at Constantinople was marked by more than one outburst of fanatical orthodoxy. In this city the persecution of heretics was always a favourite pursuit both with the clergy and with the people, and, since the death of the Monophysite Empress Theodora, the savage bigotry and intolerance of the Catholic party had blazed forth with greater vehemence than ever. In the reign of Justin the Second repressive measures had been taken against the Samaritans and Monophysites. The latter were expelled from their monasteries; the orders of their clergy were annulled; and in many cases their persons were subjected to gross indignity and outrage. The Emperor Tiberius, if he did not approve, at least permitted the continuance of these proceedings,

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 33.

[2] Greg. *Dial.* iii. 36. Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 33 attributes the escape of Maximianus to the merits of Gregory: "Ut hinc omnipotens Deus ostenderet, quia per meritum Gregorii quem fratres visitaverant, hanc onustam (navem) sua manu tenuerat, quae ab hominibus vacua permanere non potuit super aquas."

and further, in the last year of his reign, he sanctioned a persecution of the Arians, who had provoked the people by requesting that a place of worship might be granted them. By such methods of coercion the great heresies were for the time stamped out, and orthodoxy triumphed. Still the restless, inquisitive temper of Eastern Christianity could not rest satisfied with the victory it had gained, but was ever on the alert to scent out new doctrines and opinions which might be branded as heretical, to suspect gross errors in ambiguous phrases, to exaggerate differences of opinion, and, in cases of doubt, to affix the worst interpretation. "There are many orthodox people," wrote Gregory, as the result of his experience of the Constantinopolitan divines,[1] "who are inflamed with misguided zeal, and fancy they are fighting heretics while really they are creating heresies." Gregory's own method of dealing with suspected persons was sensible and straightforward. He made it a rule to become personally acquainted with those who were accused of heresy, to talk over their opinions with them in a friendly way, and to accept the orthodox assurances of those whose general veracity he had no good reason to doubt. Often he received visits from persons who were reputed to maintain erroneous views—for instance, that marriage could be dissolved if one of the parties desired to enter a monastery; that past sins were not completely remitted in baptism; that any one who had done penance for three years might thenceforth sin with impunity; that anathemas uttered on compulsion were not binding on those who uttered them—opinions which, in Gregory's view, no real Christian could hold. Yet, when he had conversed awhile with his visitors, the Nuncio generally found that they did not really maintain these errors, but rather that the errors themselves existed only in the too-lively imagination of the orthodox zealots. In such cases, even in defiance of popular opinion, Gregory did not hesitate to give his friendship to the reputed heretics, and to protect them to the utmost of his power from injury and persecution.

On the other hand, when he was convinced that heretical doctrines were indeed being promulgated, Gregory felt it his duty to express publicly his disapprobation, and on one occasion

[1] Greg. *Epp.* xi. 27.

at least he engaged in a somewhat notable theological dispute.[1] His antagonist in this affair was no less a person than the Patriarch himself—that inconvenient rival of the Bishop of Rome in the guardianship of the Faith. There was a certain piquancy about a controversy with so eminent an opponent, that perhaps made Gregory more eager than he would otherwise have been to fling himself into the theological arena. The Patriarch in question was one Eutychius, who had been nominated by Justinian in 552, deposed by the same arbitrary authority in 565, and restored to his see by Tiberius.[2] He was a man of acute and philosophic intellect, and had published a treatise on the subject of the Resurrection, which contained the proposition that the risen bodies of the elect would be "impalpable, more subtle than wind or air." This assertion the orthodox Roman monk emphatically denied, maintaining, on the contrary, that the risen body would be "palpable by virtue of its own nature, but rendered subtle by the efficacy of spiritual power." He emphasized the analogy between the risen bodies of the elect and that of the Lord, and pressed Eutychius with the words, *Handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.* The Patriarch replied, "The Lord did this that He might remove from the hearts of His disciples all doubt of the Resurrection." "What!" cried Gregory. "Are we then to doubt of the very thing which cured the doubt of the disciples?" and he charged his opponent with holding Doketic views. The Patriarch explained himself thus: "The body which Christ showed them was certainly palpable; but after that the faith of those who handled it was confirmed, all that was palpable was reduced to a certain subtle quality." To which Gregory responded that such a change would have been, in a sense, a return into death, and would therefore imply a denial of the true resurrection of the flesh of Christ. Eutychius then quoted, *Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* But Gregory met this argument by distinguishing two senses in which the word "flesh" is used in Scripture—that "according to nature," and that "according to sin or corruption." The distinction was accepted by the Patriarch,

[1] Greg. *Mor.* xiv. 72–74; Baeda *Hist. Eccl.* ii. 1; Paul. Diac. *Vita* 9; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 28–30.

[2] *Acta Sanctorum*, 6 Apr.

who nevertheless adhered to his original proposition that the risen body would be impalpable. Meanwhile the controversy had grown protracted and embittered, and at length the Emperor determined to bring it to a close. The Patriarch and the Nuncio were accordingly summoned to a private audience, and requested to state their respective views. After carefully considering all the arguments, Tiberius declared himself on the side of Gregory, condemned the Patriarch's opinion, and ordered his book to be burnt. The end came none too soon. Both the disputants, worn out with excitement, fell dangerously ill. Gregory's youth pulled him through; but to the aged Patriarch the controversy proved fatal. Some of Gregory's friends went to visit him on his death-bed, and the old man, taking hold of the skin of his hand, exclaimed, "I acknowledge that in this flesh I shall rise again"—a statement that was regarded as a recantation of his error.

While Eutychius was still alive, a disturbance occurred in the city, which went near to having serious consequences.[1] The outbreak and its cause are characteristic of the times. A certain official at Antioch, named Anatolius, was detected in the practice of sacrificial rites. He was accordingly brought to trial, together with his associates, but by a judicious distribution of bribes secured an acquittal. The populace of Antioch, however, feeling themselves defrauded of the grateful spectacle of a magician's execution, broke out into riot, and so terrified the judges that they promulgated a sentence of condemnation. Here the matter would doubtless have ended in the usual way, had it not been that Gregory, the Patriarch of Antioch, was suspected of being an accomplice of the condemned. A charge of such magnitude preferred against a Patriarch could not be hushed up, so the Emperor ordered Anatolius and his confederates to be sent to Constantinople, that the whole matter might be thoroughly investigated. Hearing of this decree, the magician was in despair, and foreseeing nothing but a painful death, he fled as a suppliant to a certain celebrated image of the Mother of God. But when he approached, the image, so rumour said, deliberately turned its back. The wretched man, therefore, with the rest of his party, was carried to Constantinople; but here even the most excruciating tortures failed to elicit any

[1] Evagr. *Hist.* v. 18.

evidence incriminating Bishop Gregory. Indeed, the inquisitors seem to have concluded that many of the condemned men themselves were less guilty than was supposed, for, instead of sentencing all alike to death, they let off some with the comparatively light penalty of banishment. This leniency, however, greatly displeased the mob, and a serious outbreak occurred. A cry was raised that the Emperor and the Patriarch were betraying the Faith. The judges and Eutychius were sought for through the city, and, had they been caught, they would undoubtedly have been torn to pieces. The unfortunate criminals, who had no chance of effecting their escape, were dragged from their prison and burnt alive; Anatolius alone was reserved for the wild beasts. So at length, the mob having spent its fury and upheld to its own satisfaction the sanctity of the Christian religion, the tumult subsided.[1]

The Patriarch Eutychius succumbed to Gregory's argument and his own infirmities in 582, and after a vacancy of only six days his place was filled by John, a Cappadocian and "a deacon of the great church."[2] The new bishop was familiarly known as "the Faster," inasmuch as, in the quaint language of Theophylact,[3] "he had completely acquired a philosophic mastery over pleasures, and a tyrannical authority over the passions, and had made himself the despot of the appetites." He cultivated an extreme asceticism—lived in poverty, dressed meanly, and ate barely enough to keep body and soul together. When he died, thirteen years later, his only available assets were a wooden bed, a worn woollen blanket, and a dirty cloak,

[1] The zeal of the populace on this occasion probably aroused in Gregory a feeling of admiration rather than of regret. He was himself a firm believer in magic, and regarded those who practised it as the worst enemies of God. He believed, further, that if magicians were permitted to live, the Divine vengeance would fall on the whole community that tolerated them. Hence the summary treatment meted out to the sorcerers would have seemed to him justified as the only means of averting the wrath of Heaven from the heads of the innocent. In *Dial.* i. 4 he remarks, of the sorcerer Basilius, "In hac Romana urbe, *exardescente zelo Christiani populi*, igne crematus est"; with which compare the language of Evagrius, *loc. cit.* He himself encouraged the persecution of "incantatores atque sortilegos" (*Epp.* xi. 33), and ordered the punishment of certain clerics, "maleficio, quod vulgo canterma dicitur . . . maculatos" (*Epp.* v. 31). For the legend of his own encounter with wizards, see the *S. Gallen Life* c. 22, and Paul. Diac. *Vita* 25.

[2] Theophanes *Chron. A. M.* 6074.

[3] Theophylact *Hist.* vii. 6.

all of which were promptly annexed by the reigning Emperor as precious relics of a saint.[1] Stern to himself, John was not less severe to others. Grave, rigid, and austere, he possessed but few of the lighter graces and amenities which make men popular. He was universally respected, however, as a man of sincere, if somewhat harsh, piety, as a theologian of no mean attainments, and an author. Of personal and private ambition John seems to have had but little. He professed to be, and he probably really was, unwilling to accept the dignity of the patriarchate. But, once consecrated, he set himself with the utmost deliberation to increase, by every means, the power and influence of his see. His object was to secure for the Patriarchs of Constantinople an acknowledged supremacy over the Church of the East, and thus to raise them to a position of complete equality with the Patriarchs of the West, *i.e.* the Popes. With this end in view, he adopted the policy of undermining, on the one hand, the authority of the Patriarch of Alexandria, his most formidable rival in the East, and, on the other hand, of asserting on all occasions his own independence of the Bishop of Rome. This ecclesiastical ambition brought him at a later time into conflict with Gregory, who was never tired of rebuking the "wicked pride" of his brother Patriarch. But even from the first it is scarcely probable that there could have subsisted any great cordiality between these two men—each the best product of his world, each noted and admired for his ascetic piety, and each bent on extending the power of his own Church at the expense of that of the other. John and Gregory were drawn by circumstances into rivalry, and were compelled, of necessity, to regard one another with entire distrust. This feeling, on Gregory's part at any rate, seems soon to have developed into positive dislike.

In the first year of his patriarchate John distinguished himself by his zeal in an affair which provides us with another curious illustration of the social conditions of the time, and of the gross superstition that permeated all classes of society. The incident, as related by Theophylact,[2] is as follows. The Church of St. Glycera at Heraclea was renowned for a miraculous

[1] For miracles wrought through the beds of other saints, see Greg. Tur. *Glor. Confess.* 85; *Vit. Patr.* 7, 8; *De Mir. S. Martini* iii. 22.

[2] Theophylact *Hist.* i. 11.

flow of oil which was believed to exude from the body of the martyr.[1] The bishop of the city, having remarked that the vessel which received the oil was only of common brass, took upon himself to substitute for it a silver bowl which he had recently purchased at Constantinople. But no sooner was the change made than the miracle abruptly ceased. Days passed by, and the supernatural gift was still withheld. Then a solemn fast was ordered, and days of mourning, and the whole city gave itself to lament and intercession. At length it was revealed to the bishop in a dream that the silver bowl which he had purchased had originally belonged to a sorcerer, who had used it in the celebration of his illicit rites. It was the contact of this abomination which had caused the stoppage of the oil. Of course, after this, the tainted vessel was at once removed, whereupon the saint renewed her miracle, and "the fountain of her grace" commenced to flow as before. The bishop then hastened back to Constantinople, found out the silversmith who had sold him the bowl, and dragged him before the Patriarch, into whose horrified ears he poured out his dreadful story. As the result of a searching inquiry, it was discovered that the original owner of the vessel was a certain Paulinus, a man of education and respectable standing, who, however, "had sunk his soul in the depths of sorcery," and had used the bowl as a receptacle of the blood of victims which he had sacrificed "while conversing with the apostate powers." Great was the indignation of the saintly Faster when these facts came to light. He hurried at once to the Palace, and urgently demanded the punishment of the guilty man. The Emperor, averse to extreme measures, thought that more might be gained if the criminal were brought to repentance than if he were led to execution. But the Patriarch insisted, "with apostolic zeal," that one "who abandoned the Faith ought to be burnt alive," quoting in support of his contention a passage of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which ends with the words, "*That which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be*

[1] A somewhat similar miracle is alleged to have taken place in the Church of St. Euphemia at Chalcedon. On the anniversary of St. Euphemia's martyrdom, blood flowed from the tomb. It was collected by the bishop in sponges and squeezed into glass bottles, which were distributed among the people. See the curious account of the testing of the genuineness of this miracle by Maurice (Theophylact, viii. 14).

burned." The Emperor yielded so far as to permit Paulinus, together with his son and disciple, to be condemned to death. The son was beheaded before his father's eyes, after which the unhappy "sorcerer" himself was strangled, and the blood-lust of the rabid Byzantine mob was once more satisfied.

Before this occurrence, however, an event of great political importance had taken place, at which Gregory, in his capacity of ambassador, must necessarily have assisted. In the month of August of the year 582, eight years after his adoption by Justin, and four years after he became sole Emperor, Tiberius, conscious of failing strength, determined to elect a successor. His choice fell on Maurice, commander of the newly enrolled corps of the Foederati, a man of mature years and experience, who had been selected by the Emperor as his principal agent for carrying out the scheme of army reform, and had recently been serving with distinction in the Persian War. At the time of his birth and afterwards prodigies and portents had seemed to foreshadow his elevation to the Imperial dignity;[1] and when in the summer of 582 he returned from the East to Constantinople, he found the promised diadem awaiting him.

On the 13th of August, the day fixed for the public nomination of the new Emperor,[2] Tiberius summoned the Patriarch and principal clergy, the praetorian guards, the nobles of the court, the foreign ambassadors, and the prominent leaders of the circus-factions, to meet him in the open court before the Palace. When all were assembled, the dying prince was carried in on a litter. He was far too ill to make a speech himself, but the address, which he had previously dictated, was read aloud in his presence by an official. In this speech, after alluding to his anxiety to find a suitable successor, and declaring his entire confidence in Maurice, whose distinguished career in the past was a pledge of his future zeal and ability, the Emperor continued with the following exhortation: "I pray you, Maurice, let your reign be the noblest epitaph in my honour; adorn my tomb with your virtues; shame not the hopes of those who

[1] Evagr. *Hist.* v. 21.

[2] Theophylact *Hist.* i. 1; Theophanes *Chron. A. M.* 6074; Zonaras, iii. p. 182 (ed. Bonn). John of Ephesus dates the investiture of Maurice the 5th of August, and makes Tiberius die eight days after. According to the *Chron. Pasch.* (ed. Bonn, i. p. 690), Maurice was created Caesar on the 5th, crowned Emperor on the 13th, and on the 14th Tiberius died.

have trusted you; forget not the virtues you possess; cast no slur on your nobility. Let reason be a curb upon your power, let philosophy guide the helm of your government. Think not that you surpass all men in wisdom, because you surpass them in the gifts of fortune.[1] Seek eagerly to be loved, not feared, by your subjects. Prefer reproof to flattery; and let justice be your constant councillor. To you, as a philosopher, the purple should seem no better than a worthless rag, the jewels of the crown no better than the pebbles on the shore. To a philosophic mind the Imperial sceptre denotes, not the unbridled licence of power, but an honourable slavery.[2] This is my advice to you: as you follow it or not you will have for your judge that Power which gives honour to virtue and brings vice to naught, and which no bribes can turn aside." When the speaker ceased, the great throng was dissolved in tears. Then the dying Emperor rose with an effort, and invested his successor with the purple chlamys and placed the diadem on his brow. Maurice faced the people, and was greeted with shouts of acclamation; and thus, adds the historian, the nomination of the new Emperor was formally completed "in accordance with the laws of the Empire."[3]

The dying Tiberius was carried back to bed, and expired on the following day. The grief of the people was intense. Every one put on mourning and hastened to the Palace of the Hebdomon, where the body lay in state, and all night long processions wound slowly through the streets, carrying torches and chanting funeral hymns and litanies. At daybreak next morning an enormous concourse accompanied the funeral *cortége* to the Church of the Holy Apostles, and all united in praising the virtues of the departed Emperor and lamenting his decease. But when the last rites were performed, and Tiberius had been gathered to his predecessors in the mausoleum of the Emperors, his fickle subjects dried their tears and turned to pay their court to the new sovereign. As Theophylact cynically remarks, "It is human nature to forget the past and care only for the things of the present."[4]

[1] Greg. *Reg. Past.* ii. 6, gives, as one of the signs of a bad ruler: "Cunctis se aestimat amplius sapere, quibus se videt amplius posse."

[2] Greg. *Mor.* xxiv. 55: "Rector providus tanto iam neque rex apostata, neque dux impius vocabitur, quanto ei cogitatione sollicita potestas quae accepta est, non honor sed onus aestimatur."

[3] Theophylact *Hist.* i. 1.

[4] *Ibid.* i. 2.

Maurice was a native of Arabissus in Cappadocia—a short, sturdy, round-faced man, forty-three years of age, with bald head, straight nose, and high complexion.[1] His abilities were second-class, his virtues uninteresting. Hardworking, precise, well acquainted with the details of public administration, and eager to discharge with conscientious exactness the duties of his position, he was nevertheless, as a ruler, "almost completely ineffectual." He lacked sagacity and breadth of view, and was quite incapable of winning the esteem and confidence of the public. His position was, of course, exceptionally difficult. The State was nearly bankrupt, the army was undisciplined and extravagant, the administration was utterly corrupt, the aristocracy turbulent and insolent; and in addition to these internal disorders the resources of the Empire were drained and its integrity threatened by wars both in East and West. Maurice endeavoured to overcome his difficulties by a system of rigid and irritating economy, and by a policy of close alliance with the oppressive aristocracy. But these measures, without materially relieving the tension of the situation, increased the Emperor's embarrassment by making him unpopular with the army and the people. The troops grumbled when their pay and rations were cut down and their irregularities checked; and they had little respect for "a military pedant" who "found time to write a work on military tactics,[2] without succeeding in acquiring a great military reputation." The people, on the other hand, resented his alliance with the detested nobles, and avenged themselves by spreading about all kinds of rumours extremely prejudicial to his fair fame. It is clear that Maurice was the type of man out of which good ministers and subordinates are made, but he wanted that force of judgment and discretion which alone could qualify him for piloting the State in this distressing crisis of its fortunes.

For the rest Maurice's private character was prosaically unimpeachable.[3] He was curiously free from the vices and

[1] Cedrenus, vol. i. p. 691.

[2] The Στρατηγικά in twelve books, published together with Arrian's *Tactica*, by John Scheffer, Upsala, 1664.

[3] For Maurice's character, see Theophylact *Hist. passim*; Evagrius *Hist.* v. 19; Menander *Fragm.* (ed. Bonn, p. 443). Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 15 says of Maurice: "primus ex Graecorum genere in imperio confirmatus est."

weaknesses which had brought contempt on many of his predecessors. He was neither avaricious (though he was reputed so) nor extravagant. A true Christian and entirely orthodox, he had yet no wish to arbitrate on theological matters, and he refused to persecute. He was calm, self-restrained, prudent, and merciful. His tastes were of the simplest. He subjected himself to strict discipline, "having banished from his soul the mob-rule of the passions and installed in its place an aristocracy of reason."[1] Morally he was a pattern of decorum; intellectually he had no mean share of common sense, was quick-witted, a diligent student of literature, and a patron of literary men.[2] His manners, however, were stiff and difficult; he granted audiences sparingly, and only to persons who came on serious business; and he closed his ears against the idle conversation and the flatteries of courtiers. Maurice, in short, was a thoroughly worthy man, but his heavy and measured virtue was not of the sort to inspire enthusiasm or conciliate affection.

Shortly after his accession, Maurice was joined in marriage with Constantina,[3] the younger daughter of Tiberius, a somewhat homely lady, of a pious and retiring disposition. The wedding was celebrated with great magnificence. The rite was performed by the Patriarch in the Palace. Maurice wore a purple robe, embroidered with gold, and covered with Indian gems, and on his head a golden coronet set thick with jewels. He and his bride were escorted by all the most distinguished civil and military officials, who carried nuptial flambeaux and chanted bridal songs in their honour. For seven days in succession the city abandoned itself to the festivities. The Emperor provided banquets for the magistrates, and equestrian games for the people. Bands of music patrolled the streets. There were theatrical performances in the open air, with broad farces, and mimes, and conjurers, and buffoons; and, to evidence their loyalty, the rich merchants and nobles increased and prolonged the revelry, squandering fortunes in

[1] Evagr. *Hist.* vi. 1.

[2] Menander *Fragm.* (ed. Bonn, p. 439); cf. Theophylact viii. 13. In the Dialogus prefixed to his work, Theophylact calls Maurice, *τὸν ἐμὸν βασιλέα Σωκράτην.*

[3] Evagr. *Hist.* vi. 1; Theophylact *Hist.* i. 10. The *Paschal Chronicle* seems to say that the marriage took place on the 13th of August, the day of the investiture; but this is scarcely likely.

lavish hospitality, and vying with each other in their display of jewels, sumptuous dresses, and gold and silver plate.

Two years later, in August, 584, these rejoicings were renewed on the occasion of the birth of a son to Maurice. The people, who had good cause to dread a disputed succession, were delighted when they heard that there was an heir to the Empire; and when Maurice appeared in the Hippodrome, they shouted to him, "God grant thee well, for thou hast freed us from subjection to many." The child was called Theodosius, in memory of Theodosius the Second, the last Emperor who had been born in the purple,[1] and Gregory himself stood sponsor for him at his baptism.[2]

Meanwhile, when the marriage festivities came to an end, the grave-faced Roman monk presented himself at the Palace, to urge once more the request which for the last four years he had been ceaselessly pressing upon the Government, that assistance might be sent to Italy. Unfortunately for his hopes, however, Maurice proved even less tractable in this matter than Tiberius. Indeed, his hands were already over-full. The Persian War continued to be, in the phrase of Theophylact, the "ulcer of the State."[3] The Avars and Slaves were extending their depredations with ever-increasing boldness. The armies of the Empire were insufficient to cope successfully even with these enemies, and certainly no extra troops could be spared for Italy. Maurice, therefore, frankly told Gregory that he was quite unable to send succours; he offered, however, to open negotiations with the Franks, with the object of persuading them to turn their arms against the Lombards.

Now, it happened that Pope Pelagius had already, in his extremity, turned to Gaul for aid. Since the conversion of Clovis, the Franks had been of the orthodox belief: hence Pelagius was well disposed to welcome them into Italy in the character of defenders of the faith. In 581 he had addressed a remarkable letter to Aunachar,[4] bishop of Auxerre, in which, after bewailing his "tribulations and temporal straits . . . the shedding of innocent blood, the violation of holy altars, the

[1] John of Ephesus, v. 14; Theophanes *Chron. A. M.* 6077.
[2] Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* x. 1; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 40.
[3] Theophylact *Hist.* iii. 9.
[4] Pelag. II. *Epp.* iv. (Labbe, v. pp. 939, 940).

insults offered by idolaters to the Catholic Faith," and reminding his correspondent that the Franks were "members of the Catholic Church, united in one body under One Head," he continued: "I believe that God has in a wonderful manner united your kings to the Roman Empire in the confession of the orthodox faith, in order to provide a protection for the whole of Italy and for the city from which the orthodox faith proceeded. Beware lest your kings, through levity of purpose, fail in their high mission. Persuade them as far as possible to keep themselves from all alliance with our most unspeakable enemies the Lombards, lest, when the day of vengeance dawns (God send it may do so speedily!) your kings share in the Lombards' punishment." Maurice thus was not acting without good precedent when he sought for assistance from the conquerors of Gaul. In 584 he sent an embassy to the Austrasian king Childebert, who consented to expel the Lombards from Italy for a consideration of fifty thousand solidi. The money was handed over, and Childebert crossed the Alps. Having crossed, however, he allowed himself to be bought off by the Lombards, and so returned quietly to his own kingdom, having made a very handsome profit out of the whole transaction.[1] Maurice, of course, was exceedingly indignant at this display of Frankish perfidy, and repeatedly demanded the repayment of his money; but in spite of all the Emperor's threats and protests, not one solidus was ever returned into the coffers of Constantinople.

Things went from bad to worse; and in 585 Gregory received a distracted letter from the Pope. "We have taken care," Pelagius wrote,[2] "to inform you, through our notary Honoratus, of everything which it is necessary for you to know, and we have sent him to you, with our brother and fellow-bishop Sebastian, that, as he has been up to the present time at Ravenna with the Glorious Lord Decius the Patrician, he may give you full information on all points, and may make such statements to the Emperor as you may consider desirable. The miseries and tribulations inflicted on us by the perfidy of the Lombards, in violation of their oath, are such as no one

[1] Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* vi. 42; Paul. Diac. *Hist. Lang.* iii. 17.

[2] Pelag. II. *Epp.* iii. (Labbe, v. 938); Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 32. The letter is dated "iv. Nonas Octobris, indictione iii." (*i.e.* 584); but Troya is probably right in reading "indict. iiii." (*i.e.* 585).

can describe. The Commonwealth in these parts is reduced to such straits that unless God inspires the heart of our Most Religious Prince to display his natural benevolence to his servants, and relieve our troubles by sending us one Master of the Soldiery or one Duke, we shall be utterly destitute and defenceless. For the district of Rome is more than any other left unguarded, and the Exarch writes that he cannot help us, as he protests that he cannot even protect the districts where he is himself. May God direct our Prince speedily to relieve our perils before the army of that most unspeakable nation prevails so far as to seize those places which still as yet belong to the Republic." Gregory, we may believe, did his best to second the Pope's appeal; but his efforts met with no success.

One remarkable circumstance connected with Gregory's sojourn at Constantinople deserves a passing notice. Although he resided some six years in the Greek-speaking capital, he yet never succeeded in mastering even the rudiments of that language.[1] This is the more extraordinary, since Greek was by this time firmly established as the official language of the Empire. Justinian was the last Emperor who either in public or private life used the Latin tongue. The old Roman titles of the Emperor and the great officials—the prefects, praetors, patricians, etc.—still survived; but of these magnates with Latin appellations few could speak the language of Old Rome. Greek was now the language of officialdom, and John Lydus, a civil servant of Justinian's age, already complains that knowledge of Latin, which he had once found a useful and valuable accomplishment, was no longer profitable.[2] Even professedly literary men were rarely acquainted with the tongue of the West: Procopius, for instance, though he had travelled in Italy, was utterly ignorant of the idiom of the country. In Gregory's time, therefore, at Constantinople Greek was the language of the court, of the Church, of the law-courts, of the bureaus, of the Hippodrome and the streets. The residents in the city, whether noble or plebeian, learned or ignorant, could rarely speak anything else. Greek was the language alike of

[1] Greg. *Epp.* vii. 29; xi. 55. In iii. 63 he refuses to reply to a lady who wrote to him in Greek. He frequently complains of the badness of the interpreters (i. 28; vii. 27; x. 14, 21; cf. Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 14).

[2] Joh. Lydus *De Magistrat.* iii. 42.

diplomacy, literature, and ordinary life. And thus it seems to us strange, in the first instance, that Gregory, who knew only Latin, should ever have been appointed permanent ambassador at this Hellenistic court. Still stranger, however, is the fact that, after all the years during which he resided there, he should never have acquired even a smattering of the Imperial idiom. Was he more than ordinarily stupid? Our general knowledge of him seems to contradict such an hypothesis. Or was he negligent and careless? Or was he contemptuous—"an old-fashioned Roman," disdaining to learn the dialect of New Rome? Whatever the explanation may be, the fact remains that to the day of his death Gregory was unable either to speak or read or write the simplest sentence in the Greek language.

Gregory's official position in Constantinople naturally brought him into contact with a number of influential people, with some of whom he contracted close friendships. His relations with the Emperor himself do not appear to have been cordial. Maurice's lukewarmness in the Italian cause disgusted the patriotic Roman, while Gregory's importunate and impracticable demands annoyed the Emperor. For the Empress Constantina, however, Gregory entertained a genuine regard, and he frequently wrote to her in later times, to ask her help or give her spiritual advice. With two other members of the Imperial family he was on terms of intimacy—with Theoctista, the aunt and governess of the royal children,[1] and with Domitian, cousin of the Emperor and Metropolitan of Armenia.[2] Of the people connected with the court his best friends were Theodore, the Emperor's physician, Gregoria, one of Constantina's ladies of the bed-chamber, and Narses, who may perhaps be identified with the celebrated general who won his laurels in the Persian War, and was afterwards burned alive by the Emperor Phocas.[3] Among his other acquaintances we may mention Cyriacus who later succeeded

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 5; vii. 23; xi. 27.

[2] Evagrius *Hist.* vi. 17 describes Domitian as "a man of singular prudence and shrewdness, distinguished both in speech and action, and well fitted to transact business of the greatest importance." See further Theophanes *Chron. A. M.* 6081; Theophylact *Hist.* iv. 14–16; v. 3, 4; viii. 11; Greg. *Epp.* iii. 62; ix. 4.

[3] Ewald, however, argues against this identification. See his note on Greg. *Epp.* i. 6.

John as Patriarch, Constantius who became archbishop of Milan, the nobles Alexander and Andreas, Priscus the Patrician, Philippicus the Comes Excubitorum, Rusticiana a Roman lady who had taken up her residence in Constantinople, and Anastasius, the deposed Patriarch of Antioch. This last was a learned theologian who had dared to publish a refutation of the Aphthartodoketic Edict of Justinian, and who had earned the dislike of the succeeding Emperor by squandering the property of his see, "to prevent" (as he said) "its being carried off by that pest of the universe, Justin." For this offence and for his insulting language, Anastasius was deposed in 570, and came to reside as a private person at Constantinople.[1] Here he met Gregory, and a friendship soon sprang up between the men. Anastasius looked upon the eloquent, ascetic Roman as the very "mouth and lantern of the Lord"[2]; while Gregory, on his side, was no less attracted by the austere, disciplined character of the persecuted Bishop, and at a later period, as we shall see, he used all his influence to get him restored to his patriarchate.

Gregory's most intimate friend, however, was the saintly Spaniard, Leander, archbishop of Seville. This man had come to Constantinople to further the interests of his convert,[3] Hermenigild, the Catholic prince of Spain, who had taken up arms against his Arian father, King Leovigild. After Hermenigild's death, Leander dared not return to his native country until after the decease of Leovigild, which took place in 586. During his stay at Constantinople, the famous archbishop was Gregory's constant companion. The tastes and interests of the two closely corresponded. A theologian, a controversialist against the Arians, a writer of discourses on the Psalms, a musical composer, a student of matters liturgical, a charming letter-writer, an enthusiastic admirer of the monastic life, Leander was a man after Gregory's own heart. At all hours he was to be found at the house of the Nuncio, assisting

[1] Evagrius *Hist.* iv. 39; v. 5.

[2] Greg. *Epp.* i. 7.

[3] Curiously enough, Hermenigild's conversion is not mentioned by either Joannes Biclarensis or Isidore. It is recorded, however, by Greg. Tur. v. 39; Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 21; and Greg. *Dial.* iii. 31 (who attributes it to the influence of Leander). For a short account of Leander, see Isidor. *De Vir. Illustr.* 41; Mabillon *AA. SS. ord. S. Benedict.* i. p. 378, *sqq.*

him in his studies, criticizing his expositions, and advising him on the affairs of his Church. He it was who importuned Gregory to compose his Commentaries on Job, and to him that work was appropriately dedicated. He was the closest friend that Gregory ever had, and although the two never met after Gregory's departure from Constantinople, yet the latter, many years later, could say in one of his letters, that in a certain sense he had Leander before his eyes continually; "for the image of thy countenance is impressed for ever on my innermost heart."[1]

In spite of these friendships and alleviations, Gregory found his duties at Constantinople increasingly irksome. He was bombarded from Rome with distracted appeals to accomplish the impossible and get troops sent to Italy. He was regarded by the Emperor with disfavour as a tiresome petitioner, whose repeated complaints and demands were becoming a nuisance. The Patriarch and the clerical party were suspicious of him; the brilliant and luxurious courtiers disliked him for his aloofness and inaccessibility. At the same time, he was weighed down with a sense of failure and ineffectiveness. The senseless pageantry of the capital went on from day to day, and no one stopped to listen to the sorrowful monk pleading vainly for his beloved fatherland. It was natural that Gregory should be discouraged. Yet, after all, his mission was not quite without result. For Italy, it is true, he had not accomplished much; but for his own career his experience at the Imperial court was of the highest value. He had tried his hand at diplomacy; he had studied the characters and capacities of the leading men of the day; he had made himself acquainted with the workings of the Imperial Government; and he had learned at least this one important lesson—that the Empire was a broken reed to lean upon, that Rome and Italy must be saved, if at all, by the vigorous and independent action of the powers at home. Thus Gregory's time had not been wasted. If in the present there was but little to show for his work during these six years, yet in the future it was destined to bear much fruit in the making of a great career, and the shaping of the history of the Papacy and all the West.

It was probably in the spring of 586[2] that the archdeacon

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 41.

[2] The date of Gregory's recall depends on (1) the letter of Pelagius to Gregory

Laurentius was sent as apocrisiarius to Constantinople, and Gregory was recalled to Rome. He returned in great joy, carrying with him, it is said, the arm of St. Andrew and the head of St. Luke—precious relics presented by the Emperor for the enrichment of his monastery.[1] To this longed-for refuge he was for a while permitted to retire, until the course of events made it necessary for him to exchange it for the dignities of the palace of the Lateran.

(Pelag. II. *Epp.* iii.), which must probably be dated October 4, 585, though it may have been written in 584; and (2) Pelagius's letter to Elias (Greg. *Epp.* Appendix iii.), said by Paul (*H. L.* iii. 20) to have been composed by Gregory, which belongs to 586. Gregory must then have returned before the end of 586. Whether he returned in that year or in 585 depends on the date we assign to Pelagius's letter. If the letter was not sent till October 585, Gregory could not have left Constantinople before the following spring; if it was written in 584, he may have returned in 585. Yet even if we adopt the earlier date for this letter, it still seems best to assign Gregory's recall to 586, since Pelagius gives no hint of any intention of summoning him home, but sends him directions as though he were to remain in Constantinople some time longer.

[1] Baronius, ad ann. 586.

CHAPTER VII

THE LOMBARDS, 574–590

WHILE Gregory was going through his training in the monastery and at Constantinople, the affairs of the Lombards had not, on the whole, been prospering. After the assassination of King Cleph, there was an interregnum for ten years. Cleph's son Authari was a minor; and the rivalries of the Lombard dukes prevented their electing one of their own number either as regent or as king. Accordingly, for a period of ten years,[1] each of the thirty-five dukes administered his own strip of territory according to his own liking, and without being held accountable to any superior authority. Of these thirty-five the highest in rank was Zaban, duke of Pavia, who took the lead in the joint deliberations and expeditions of the chieftains; six others were pre-eminent, viz. Wallari, duke of Bergamo, Alichis of Brescia, Euin of Trent, Gisulf of Friuli, Farwald of Spoleto, and Zotto of Benevento. The names and localities of the remaining twenty-eight are not given in our authorities, but the dukedoms probably corresponded approximately with the principal episcopal towns of conquered Italy.

Of the military operations during these ten years we have but scanty information. On the death of Pope John the Third, communications between Rome and Constantinople were apparently cut off, so that some months elapsed before the vacant bishopric could be filled. In the time of Benedict the First the Lombards swept over the whole of Italy. The invasion coincided with a severe famine, and many fortified places which had hitherto held out for the Empire were compelled by hunger to capitulate. Rome itself was in danger, but the Emperor

[1] Paul. Diac. *Hist. Lang.* ii. 32. The *Origo*, c. 6, the Continuator of Prosper, and Fredegarius *Chron.* 45, give twelve years.

Justin relieved the distress by forwarding large consignments of corn from Egypt.[1] On the death of Benedict, again, Rome was in a state of siege, and Pope Pelagius the Second was consecrated without receiving the Imperial ratification of his election. Italy was being devastated by Lombard raiders, and an extraordinary rainfall caused unexampled mortality.[2] Moreover, about the year 579, Farwald, duke of Spoleto, captured Classis, the wealthy port of Ravenna, stripped it of its treasure, and left a Lombard garrison in occupation.[3] One would have imagined that such a calamity would have roused the Imperial Government to take vigorous action; but absolutely nothing was done. Longinus, acting possibly on instructions from the Emperor, confined himself to a policy of passive resistance. The embassies sent from Rome to Constantinople in 577 and 579 accomplished nothing material. The Government, absorbed in other interests, and unable to bear the cost of a war of reconquest, encouraged the loyal cities of Italy to stand firm, but submitted calmly to the loss of the rest.

But while the Imperialist cause lost ground, the Lombards, on their side, threw away a magnificent opportunity. Had the dukes during this period been able to come to an agreement and act in concert, it is probable that they might, with very little difficulty, have completed the conquest of the whole of the Italian peninsula. If a single duke, unaided, could plunder a town only three miles from Ravenna, and reduce Rome itself to the greatest extremities, it is surely not unreasonable to suppose that a compact confederacy of chieftains could have extinguished the last sparks of resistance, and driven the Imperial officers and troops clean out of the country. In this way there might have been established, on the firm foundation of an undivided Italy, a Lombard Empire, equal if not superior in strength to the Empire of the Franks. Unfortunately, the Lombard dukes were unable to rise to the occasion. Instead of concentrating all their forces for the systematic subjugation of the country, they remained isolated in their little principalities, prosecuting a petty, ineffectual warfare against their immediate neighbours, and avoiding one another with jealousy and distrust. Moreover, what was even worse than this, when on rare occasions

[1] *Lib. Pont. Vita Benedicti I.* [2] *Ibid. Vita Pelagii II.*
[3] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 13.

they did, to some extent, unite their forces, it was only for the purpose of carrying on a series of irritating and futile campaigns against the Franks. The senseless folly of this policy need not be pointed out. The Franks, who should have been conciliated in every way, were needlessly exasperated; the prestige of the Lombards suffered; the valleys of Aosta and Susa, on the Italian side of the Alps, were lost entirely, while all the Lombard conquests were laid open to the danger of reprisals and invasions on the part of the people who had been so foolishly provoked.[1] The blundering dukes not only failed to crush the enemies at home, but they went out of their way to excite the hostility of a dangerous neighbour—a hostility which the Emperor by bribes, and the Pope by admonitions, did their utmost to encourage.

Before long, even the dukes themselves began to realize their mistake. Their old foes the Romans, and their new foes the Franks, were coming to an understanding. The subject population of the conquered provinces of Italy, cruelly oppressed during the years of the interregnum, were eager to cast away the hated yoke. Their own forces were becoming increasingly disorganized. It was evident to all that, unless something was quickly done, the Lombard kingdom was doomed. Accordingly, in the spring of 584, the dukes met in council, and determined by common consent to revert to monarchical government. They elected as their king, Authari, son of the murdered Cleph, contributed half their possessions for his maintenance, and gave him the title Flavius, "which praenomen," says Paul,[2] "was auspiciously adopted by all the succeeding Lombard kings." In this way the dukes hoped to make up for the blunderings of the last ten years, and to recover the ground which they had lost. But the great opportunity had been missed, and it never returned; the dream of a united Lombard Italy was never destined to be realized.

Flavius Authari was a prudent and vigorous young man, and he set to work with spirit to repair, as far as possible, the effects of the late misrule. The senseless invasions of Gaul were stopped; strenuous efforts were made to overcome the

[1] Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* iv. 42, *sqq.*; Paul. *H. L.* iii. 1, *sqq.*; Marius of Aventicum, s. a. 569, 574; Fredegarius *Chron.* 45.

[2] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 16.

resistance of the Italian loyalists; the Lombard dukes were kept together and in a sort controlled; and the lot of the conquered population was rendered more endurable. Nevertheless, the king's position was one of great embarrassment. The hostility of the Franks, fanned by Imperial flattery, and by urgent appeals from the Pope, was a grave menace to his government. And at this very time, moreover, the Imperialists in Italy awoke into greater activity. In 584 or 585 the lethargic Longinus was recalled. The new Exarch was one Smaragdus —a vehement man, with a streak of madness in him, but a brave soldier and careful organizer, determined to make a name for himself by successful operations against the Lombards. The old policy of passive resistance by no means satisfied the new Governor. As carried out by Longinus, that policy, had been a conspicuous failure; Smaragdus, therefore, was all in favour of offensive measures. Between the Franks on one side, and the Exarch on the other, the crown of King Authari seemed in serious jeopardy.

When Smaragdus arrived in Ravenna, he found everything in great confusion. Time was imperatively needed to concert a scheme of action and make preparations. He therefore proposed to Authari to conclude a three years' truce, and the Lombard king, for his part, was not unwilling to fall in with the proposal.[1] Hence it was not till 587 that hostilities recommenced. In this year, Euin, duke of Trent, swooped down upon the province of Istria, burnt and pillaged far and wide, and finally concluded a truce for one year with the Exarch, and so returned with immense booty to King Authari. On the other hand, Smaragdus was not without a triumph, for, by the help of a renegade Lombard duke, named Droctulf, he recaptured the harbour of Classis, which nine years before had been taken by Duke Farwald.[2] The energetic Exarch would doubtless have done more, but, unfortunately, a violent attack of his malady necessitated his recall in 589. His energy and capacity, however, were recognized by the Government, as is proved by the fact that a few years later his appointment was restored to him.

In the spring of 590 a terrible danger menaced the Lombard state. For some time past a friendly understanding had been

[1] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 18. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 19.

growing up between the kings of the Franks and the Byzantine Emperor. The Emperor hoped, by adroit flattery and liberal bribes, to induce the warlike barbarians to support his cause in Italy, while the Franks, on their side, flattered by the friendship of the Roman potentate, and greedy for his subsidies, were not unwilling to pay off their old debt against the Lombards, and at the same time to gratify the wishes of so powerful and wealthy an ally. Thus negotiations were entered upon between the powers with a view to joint operations in Italy for the advantage of both. In 584 (as I have noticed in the previous chapter) the Austrasian king Childebert, for a consideration of fifty thousand solidi, made a demonstration against the Lombards, but withdrew from Italy on the receipt of a huge ransom. The following year another expedition crossed the Alps, but this likewise proved abortive.[1] In 588 Childebert, who had a special reason for wishing to conciliate the Emperor, equipped a third army, which, however, was so signally defeated by Authari, that only a few stragglers succeeded in getting home again in safety.[2] These early invasions seem to have been carried through, strangely enough, without any co-operation or assistance from the Imperial troops in Italy; and the result of them was practically *nil*. In the year 590, however, an ingenious and elaborate scheme was carefully prepared. It was arranged that Childebert should send out yet another expedition on a larger scale than any of the preceding, and that the Exarch should co-operate from Ravenna. A junction between Franks and Romans was to be effected, and the combined forces were to storm Pavia, seize the person of King Authari, and exterminate the Lombards. The plan thus matured was a good one, and provided that the co-operating armies acted their parts loyally, there was every reason to believe that it would be crowned with complete success.[3]

The Exarch Romanus (the successor of Smaragdus) opened the campaign in brilliant fashion by taking by assault the cities of Modena, Altino, and Mantua. Scarcely were these prizes won than a huge Frank army, officered by twenty dukes, burst

[1] Greg. Tur. *H. F.* viii. 18; Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 22.

[2] Greg. Tur. *H. F.* ix. 25; Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 29.

[3] For this invasion, see Greg. Tur. *H. F.* x. 3; Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 31, and the letters of Romanus (ed. W. Gundlach, *Mon. Germ. Hist.*).

through the passes of the Alps and poured itself into Italy. The invading host was originally split up into three divisions, led respectively by the generals Olo, Audovald, and Chedin. Olo, however, marched his division to Bellinzona, and, while besieging the place, was killed by a javelin hurled from the walls; immediately after his death his men broke up the siege and joined their comrades. Thus the three divisions very early in the campaign became reduced to two. Of these one led by Audovald and seven dukes moved southwards and laid siege to Milan; the other, under Chedin and thirteen dukes, pressed on in an easterly direction towards Trent.

For the Lombards the situation was critical in the extreme. It was impossible for them with any prospect of success to engage in open battle with these vast hordes, who were besides supported by the troops of the Empire. The only hope of salvation lay in holding the towns and allowing the enemy to devastate the country till they became weary and so disposed to consider terms of peace. Authari accordingly shut himself up in Pavia, and the rest of the dukes retired to well-provisioned fortresses and awaited the turn of events. Their policy was amply justified by the issue of the war.

The movements of Audovald are somewhat obscure. We hear of a skirmish by the River Tresa, wherein a Lombard champion was overthrown and a Lombard army put to flight. There is a story, too, that messengers arrived from the Exarch, announcing that within three days the Imperial troops would effect a junction with their Frank allies, and would fire a villa on a conspicuous hill as a signal of their approach. For six days the Franks waited watching vainly for the curling smoke. Then, believing that Romanus, on whose support they had counted, had met with some disaster, and finding themselves unable to capture any town, they struck their camp and returned ingloriously home.

Meanwhile the other division under Chedin moved slowly up the valley of the Adige towards Verona. A few towns surrendered to them—ten in the valley of the Adige, two in the Valsugana, and one near Verona. In most cases the inhabitants had received Chedin's sworn assurance of good treatment; but the faithless Frank disregarded his oaths, and carried all the people into captivity. When the invaders

reached the stronghold of Verruca, a place to the west of Trent, they were met by two bishops, Ingenuinus of Seben, and Agnellus of Trent, who came to intercede for the dwellers in the town. Even Chedin was impressed by the appeal of the brave churchmen, and consented to accept ransoms varying from one solidus to six hundred solidi per head. He then pressed on as far as Verona; but at this point he was compelled to stop. The troops could no longer bear up against the effects of the Italian climate. Dysentery mowed them down by thousands, and the sufferings caused by disease were aggravated by the pangs of hunger. A retreat was determined upon and commenced, but famine and pestilence still accompanied the army. In countless numbers the soldiers perished on the road; many gave all that they had, even their very arms and clothes, to procure bread; some ended their sufferings by a voluntary death. Of all the vast army a mere remnant—gaunt, famine-stricken, and half naked—succeeded in regaining the mountain barrier, and vanished away across the snows, leaving the Lombards and Romans to fight out their quarrel as best they might, without further aid or hindrance from beyond the Alps.

Thus the great invasion came to nothing. Except for the desolation of the Italian plains, it had no important effect. The country was of course frightfully ravaged, farms were burnt, crops destroyed, and men and women carried into captivity; but no important city was taken by the Franks, no important battle was fought, no serious damage inflicted on the Lombard interests. King Authari and his treasures remained safe in Pavia, and the dukes, sheltered behind their strong walls, had been able to defy the enemy with impunity. No one, indeed, had suffered much save the unfortunate Roman peasant population, who, equally with the Lombards, were treated as enemies by their nominal defenders. In short, the Franco-Roman project for the liberation of Italy was a prodigious failure, and it may well be asked—Whose was the fault? The Exarch, of course, laid all the blame on the Frank generals, who allowed themselves to be diverted from their main object by their lust of plunder; the Franks, on the other hand, put down their failure to the unpunctuality of Romanus. Probably both causes contributed to the disaster. But, however this may be, the great danger which overhung the Lombard state rolled

harmlessly away. A peace was soon afterwards concluded between the Lombards and the kings of Burgundy and Austrasia[1]; and it was many a long year before another Western army came defiling through the Alps to trouble Italy.

But although Authari was successful in repelling the Frank invasion, he nevertheless suffered some serious reverses at the hands of the Imperialists. In addition to Modena, Altino, and Mantua, Romanus succeeded in reclaiming for his master the important towns of Parma, Reggio, and Piacenza. In the duchy of Friuli also, where Gisulf, son of Duke Grasulf, favoured the Imperial cause, he made a profitable incursion. But the retreat of the Franks necessarily put an end to the Exarch's triumphs, and before very long all the conquered cities reverted to the Lombards.

We ought not here to pass over without notice a domestic event in the life of Authari, which became by-and-bye of considerable political importance. This was his marriage in 589 with the celebrated Theudelinda, a princess of Bavaria. The Lombards had a pretty story of the king's wooing, which is retailed by Paul as follows.[2] Authari, wanting a wife, had first sent to King Childebert to request the hand of his sister Chlodosinda. Childebert accepted the proposal, but afterwards went back on his word and gave the princess to Reccared of Spain. Then Authari sent an embassy to Garibald, king of the Bavarians, asking for an alliance with his beautiful daughter Theudelinda, whose sister was already married to the powerful Euin, duke of Trent. Garibald was pleased with the idea of the marriage, and readily gave his assent. The young king, however, was anxious to judge for himself of the beauty of his betrothed. He accordingly selected a few followers whom he could trust, with an older man as apparent chief, and went in their company *incognito* to the Bavarian court. The second embassy was cordially welcomed by Garibald. The old lord who played the part of leader first made a complimentary speech, and then Authari himself stepped forward in the assumed character of ambassador, and explained that he had been commissioned by the king of the Lombards to look upon the face of the betrothed princess and make a report of her beauty. The unsuspecting Bavarian caused Theudelinda to be

[1] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 34, 35.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 30.

summoned, and Authari was enchanted with her loveliness and grace. "Truly your daughter is well worthy to be our queen," said he to Garibald; "fain would we now receive at her hand a cup of wine, even as we hope that we shall often do hereafter." So Theudelinda, at her father's command, brought a goblet and offered it first to the old lord and next to Authari. The king swallowed a draught, and in returning the cup, without being observed by any, he caught the fingers of the princess, and, while he made a low reverence, drew them over his face from the forehead downwards. When the audience was over, blushing Theudelinda told her nurse about the strange incident. "Assuredly," said the old woman, "he must be the king your suitor, else would he never have dared to do this. But let us be silent on the matter, that your father hear not of it. For verily he is a comely man, worthy to be a king and to marry you." Meanwhile handsome, yellow-haired Authari was on his way homewards, accompanied by an escort of honour which Garibald had sent to conduct his guests in safety to the frontier. When the boundary of Noricum was reached, and the Lombards were about to cross on to Italian soil, the king suddenly raised himself to his full height, whirled his battle-axe, and with incomparable dexterity sent it crashing into the trunk of a tree, crying as he did so, "Such is the blow that King Authari is wont to strike." Then the king and his people set spur to their horses and galloped away.

Soon after this King Childebert sent an army against Garibald, and, as seems probable, deposed him, setting one Tassilo in his place. Theudelinda with her brother Gundwald escaped into Italy, and sent a message to Authari, announcing her arrival. Then the king came with a great train and met his betrothed on the plain of the Lago di Garda, near the city of Verona. And in this town, on the 15th of May 589, the marriage was celebrated with great rejoicing.

Such is the story of the wooing and wedding of Authari—based, no doubt, on fact. There is one other story told of this prince, which is better known perhaps, but less credible. "It is reported," says Paul,[1] "that the same king marched through Spoleto and Benevento, and conquered all that region, penetrating even to Reggio, the extreme town of Italy, over against Sicily.

[1] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 32.

Here it is said, rising amid the sea-waves was a certain column, to which Authari drew near on horseback, and driving his lance against it, exclaimed, 'Thus far shall come the boundaries of the Lombards.' And this column is said to have remained standing to this day, and is called the Column of Authari." This legend can scarcely be regarded as historical. Like the story of Alboin's climb up the Monte del Re, it is probably merely a popular explanation of a puzzling local name.

On the 5th of September in the year 590—two days after Gregory was consecrated Pope—King Authari died in the flower of his age at Pavia, having reigned only six years and a few months.[1] There was a suspicion of poison, but of this nothing certain seems to have been discovered. Since Authari left no heir, there was some danger of another interregnum. Experience, however, had taught the dukes a lesson, and they made no fresh attempt to do without a king.

It will be convenient at this point to take a brief survey of Italy, and to give some account of the political conditions which prevailed therein at this moment.

Italy was divided into two parts, one of which still belonged to the Empire, while the other had been taken by the Lombards. Each of these parts, the Roman and the Lombard, consisted of three groups or sections—a northern group, a central group, and a southern group.

The principal Roman possessions may be reckoned as follows:—(1) In the north, Istria, Grado, the Venetian coast, maritime Liguria, and the towns of Padua, Mantua, Monselice, Cremona, Piacenza, Parma, Reggio, and Modena belonged to the Empire in 590. To these we must add the Exarchate of Ravenna and the Decapolis, which last consisted of the maritime Pentapolis—the cities of Rimini, Pesaro, Fano, Sinigaglia, and Ancona—and the inland Pentapolis—the cities of Jesi, Gubbio, Cagli, Fossombrone, and Urbino. (2) In the centre the Roman possessions included the city of Perugia, and the so-called Ducatus Romae, a district which stretched from Todi and Civitavecchia on the north to Gaeta on the south, and included practically the whole of the province of Latium. (3) The southern group comprised Naples, with a small surrounding

[1] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 35.

territory, Sipontum on the East coast, Paestum and Agropoli isolated on West coast, the two provinces of Calabria and Bruttii, and the islands of Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily.

The Lombard territory falls in the same way into three divisions:—(1) In the north the Lombards possessed all the land except that mentioned above as belonging to the Empire. It was divided up into royal domain and a number of small duchies. Its centre was the city of Pavia, the seat of the Lombard kings. The function of the Lombards of this group was to guard against incursions of Franks, Avars, and Slaves, and to harry the territory of the Exarchate on its north and western frontiers. (2) In the centre was the powerful duchy of Spoleto, which menaced the Pentapolis on the north and the Roman territory on the west. (3) South was the duchy of Benevento, constantly encroaching on the Imperial possessions in Campania and on the south-eastern boundaries of the Ducatus Romae. The two duchies of Spoleto and Benevento tended to fall away from the rest and to become increasingly independent of the Lombard monarchy at Pavia.

As will appear from the above enumeration, the Lombards were masters of the interior of the country, while the Roman territory was situated on the sea-coast or by navigable rivers, Perugia being the only important exception to this rule. The Romans were still supreme upon the sea, and so long as their ships had access to a town, the place was able to hold out. Had the Lombards been wise, they would have devoted their energies to fitting out a fleet strong enough to overcome the Romans on their own element. The Imperial cities in Italy would thus have been deprived of their chief support, and must sooner or later have capitulated. But this obvious course never seems to have suggested itself to the Lombard dukes; at any rate, it was never put into effect.

We must now briefly consider the political conditions which prevailed in this divided country; and in doing so it will be best to deal first with the Lombard Italy, and then with those parts of Italy which yet remained in the hands of the Romans.

(*a*) *Lombard Italy.*

The Lombards themselves were still in a rude state of civilization. Their appearance, as described by Paul, was not prepossessing. Wild-looking, shaggy-bearded men were they, wearing their hair close-shaven at the back, but parted on the forehead and hanging down over their cheeks in long locks. They wore loose linen garments with coloured borders, after the fashion of the Anglo-Saxons, and were shod with laced-up sandals.[1] As regards their character, they were greedy, passionate, given to intoxication, and proverbially fierce[2] in disposition, yet not entirely destitute of chivalry and generosity. In religion they were Arians—when or by whom converted, we know not. Some of them, however, or at any rate some of the tribesmen who came with them into Italy, were still pagan. We hear vague rumours of sacrificial meats and of the adoration of the head of a she-goat with accompaniment of barbaric chant and dance[3]; and there are clear accounts of the sacking and burning of churches and monasteries—Monte Cassino among the rest—of the torture and murder of monks and solitaries, and of massacres of the Catholic clergy.[4] It is evident that the Christianity of the Lombards did not prevent their putting Roman Christians to the sword when anything was to be gained by it. On the other hand, there appears to have been little strictly religious persecution of the Catholics,[5] and there are indications that the inhumanity of the conquerors has been in some degree exaggerated.[6]

Their political organization was imperfectly developed. The institution of kingship was not as yet felt to be necessary, nor was it hereditary. The kings, chosen for their noble ancestry and personal qualities, had comparatively little influence, and in many cases came to a violent end. They were sturdy

[1] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iv. 22.

[2] Velleius Paterculus, ii. 106.

[3] Greg. *Dial.* iii. 27, 28; and compare the curious story of St. Barbatus (*Acta Sanctorum*, 19 Feb.).

[4] Greg. *Dial.* i. 4; iii. 26, 37, 38; iv. 22, 23. For Monte Cassino, Greg. *Dial.* ii. 17; Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iv. 17.

[5] Greg. *Dial.* iii. 29, tells a curious story of an Arian bishop who endeavoured to take possession of the Catholic church in Spoleto.

[6] See *e.g.* the story of Sanctulus, Greg. *Dial.* iii. 37.

warriors, well suited to lead their people on plundering expeditions and to adjust the tribal disputes, but ignorant of the rudiments of statecraft. Had Alboin or Authari been gifted with a fraction of the genius of a Theodoric or a Genseric, the whole course of Italian history would have been different.

As for the thirty-five dukes, they were rough, unruly chieftains, elected originally on account of their conspicuous valour, but tending to become hereditary feudal lords, somewhat after the manner of the aristocratic despots of the Middle Ages. As yet they were still mere soldiers, having their head-quarters in their ducal towns, and supporting themselves partly by marauding expeditions and partly by the tribute exacted from the subject population. Tumultuous, ungovernable men, always engaged in murderous feuds engendered by their mutual rivalries and antagonisms, they were the principal cause of weakness to the Lombard monarchy and the chief obstacle to the consolidation of the power of the nation.

What chiefly concerns us here, however, is the state of the conquered Romans who remained on Lombard territory. This subject has been repeatedly discussed with widely different results. Some have maintained that the Romans were reduced to a condition of absolute servitude; others, on the contrary, have held that in Italy, as in Gaul and Spain, the subject people retained their liberty, their laws, their municipal institutions, and part at least of their property; and between these extreme views almost every possible form of compromise has found an advocate. Nor are such differences of opinion altogether surprising, since the data for forming a judgment are meagre and insufficient. The history of the Lombards was written at least two centuries after the conquest, the materials which the historian had to work on were evidently scanty, his account of important events and even of whole reigns is often extremely brief and defective, and his object was simply to relate the most striking facts of which he possessed a record, without particularly concerning himself with the laws or political institutions of the people. These deficiencies of Paul, moreover, cannot easily be supplied from other sources. Gregory the Great has little which bears directly on the subject, the monastic biographies of the seventh century have still less, and the series of legal documents which throw so much light

on the social condition of Italy in subsequent times are of doubtful value for the period now under consideration. Nor, again, can we argue with any confidence from the analogy of other countries, because the circumstances of the Italian conquest were very different from those of the conquest of Gaul, Spain, or Africa. In Gaul and Spain we may say, roughly, that the struggle with the Romans was soon over, and, the whole, or almost the whole of the country having become subject to the conquerors, there was little reason to apprehend a revolt of the Roman population; in Italy, however, owing to the partiality of the conquest, the danger of disaffection within Lombard territory was serious, and the escape of fugitives was rendered easy. So again in Africa the relation between the conquered population and the Vandals was clearly embittered by religious differences; but of this bitterness there is scarcely any trace in Lombard Italy. Thus, for want of definite and authoritative guidance, we are compelled to fall back on the hypotheses, more or less brilliant, of modern German and Italian scholars. To give a full account of these conjectures, however, would require a separate treatise. It seems best to me, therefore, to make no attempt to recapitulate the views of the authorities, but to confine myself simply to the theory which appears to account most satisfactorily for the facts.

In the first onset of the invasion the Lombards seem to have had little respect for the property or persons of the unfortunate Romans. When a barbarian had a fancy for a possession, he was accustomed simply to kill the owner and take the coveted object without more ado. Thus, as was natural, the wealthy suffered terribly. In the time of Cleph we read that "many Romans of distinction were either put to the sword or expelled from Italy"[1]: and during the interregnum the persecution of the aristocracy continued. This was the period of the terror. Cities were depopulated, fortresses destroyed, churches burnt, monasteries and nunneries reduced to ruins, and the trembling Romans expressed their candid opinion that the end of all things was at hand.[2] But even wholesale murder and depredation could not go on for ever. Though the Lombards had made away with the

[1] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* ii. 31.

[2] *Ibid.* ii. 32; Greg. *Dial.* iii. 38.

wealthy Roman landowners, there remained thousands of small proprietors, farmers and peasants, with whom it was necessary to come to an arrangement. This remainder, then, so Paul tells us, was divided up among the Lombard chieftains (ironically styled their "guests"), to whom they were made tributary, being compelled to pay over one-third of the produce of their holdings.[1] With the re-establishment of the monarchy the position of the Roman population remained substantially the same, though the incidental hardships of their lot were in some degree alleviated. Paul tells us that, on the accession of Authari, the dukes contributed half their property for the king's endowment. Whether the conquered people changed masters or not is uncertain; but it is clear that they still had to pay the tribute as before.[2] It does seem, however, that the authority of their over-lords was less harshly exercised during this period. "Truly," exclaims Paul, "this was a marvellous fact in the Lombard kingdom: there was no violence, no treachery; no one oppressed another with unjust exactions, no one despoiled his neighbour; there were no thefts or highway robberies; every one went about his business as he pleased in fearless security." A little consideration, however, will show conclusively that, although the conquered Romans were more equitably treated under the monarchy, yet they were very far from the enjoyment of such a Golden Age of peace and comfort as our historian's lively fancy would delineate.

The arrangement about the tribute appears at first sight not unlike the famous *tertiarum distributio* of Odovacer and Theodoric, which, according to Cassiodorus, had such excellent results in fostering a friendship between the conquered and their conquerors.[3] But there was one all-important difference

[1] "Reliqui vero, per hospites divisi, ut tertiam partem suarum frugum Langobardis persolverent, tributarii efficiuntur." Some tribute was doubtless exacted from the Roman artisans who lived in the conquered towns, but of this we have no information.

[2] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 16: "Huius diebus ob restaurationem regni duces qui tunc erant omnem substantiarum suarum medietatem regibus usibus tribuunt, ut esse possit unde rex ipse sive qui ei adhaererent eiusque obsequiis per diversa officia dediti alerentur. Populi tamen adgravati per Langobardos hospites partiuntur." (On the interpretation of this last sentence, see Hodgkin *Italy and her Invaders* vi. pp. 384–386.)

[3] Cassiod. *Var.* ii. 16.

between the Gothic and the Lombard assessment. According to the former, it was a third of the Roman land which was confiscated, the remaining two-thirds being left at the absolute disposal of the original owners to hold, or sell, or give away as they pleased. Thus the owners, when once their third part had been surrendered, were entirely free and independent. They could stay and cultivate the remainder of their land, or migrate into the cities, or retire into monasteries, without hindrance from the Goths. If they chose to remain, it often happened that local propinquity and community of interest engendered friendly relationships between the old landowners and the new settlers, to the advantage and happiness of both. And in this way the Gothic assessment created no lasting ill feeling between the two races, and was not generally regarded as burdensome. But the Lombard exaction was very different. By this arrangement the Italians were compelled to surrender a third part, not of their land, but of its produce. It is doubtful whether this third was of the net produce or of the gross produce, but most of our modern historians are now agreed that the gross produce is meant. In this case the Lombard master carried off one-third of the total produce of the Roman's soil, leaving two-thirds for working the farm and supporting the cultivator and his family. Of course, such an assessment would leave a very narrow margin of profit to the farmer, but this was, perhaps, the least of the inconveniences of the system. The Roman proprietor was no longer free; he could no longer migrate at pleasure, or dispose of his holding, or live on it in idleness. He was obliged to work day and night, that the tax on which his lord depended might be paid with regularity. He had become, in short, a serf bound to the soil, and his sole privilege was that this tax could not be arbitrarily raised.

Now, when we turn to the Lombard Codes, we find, on the one hand, a curious silence respecting the Romans, called by that name[1]; but, on the other hand, frequent reference is made to a class occupying a middle position between freemen and slaves, and known as Aldii. As compared with the slaves, these Aldii might, indeed, be called free, but theirs was at best

[1] The name Roman occurs only once in the Laws of Rothari (l. 194): "Si quis cum ancilla gentili fornicatus fuerit, componat domino eius solidos xx. Et si cum Romana, xii. solidos."

but a nominal freedom. They were entirely dependent on their lord, their service to him being regulated by customary law. Though they might possess property, they could not dispose of it without their lord's permission. In legal matters they were represented by their lord. The fines for injuring or killing them were paid to their lord, and through him also were paid the fines for crimes which the Aldii themselves committed. In short, the Aldii appear to have occupied exactly that position of serfs bound to the soil, to which, as we have seen, the Romans were in all probability reduced; and it is amid this oppressed and despised class that we must search for the unfortunate descendants of those magnificent Quirites who once had been proclaimed the sovereigns of the world.

The lot of the conquered was undoubtedly a hard one. We must beware, however, lest we depict their miseries in too lurid colours. As a matter of fact, the Lombards—at any rate after the re-establishment of the monarchy—appear to have treated the subject population with no extraordinary harshness. Gregory the Great, indeed, can say nothing too bad about the despoilers of his country; but Gregory's own letters furnish us with proof that the Lombard rule was less oppressive than he would fain make out. Thus we hear of Roman towns entering into negotiations with Lombard dukes with a view to becoming their subjects[1]; and again of frequent desertions to the enemy of Roman freemen, soldiers, and ecclesiastics.[2] In another letter the Pope complains that landowners in Corsica were compelled to take refuge with the Lombards in order to escape the intolerable burden of Imperial taxation.[3] From such indications we may conjecture that the lot of the Aldius, though cruel enough, was, at any rate, not worse than that of the Roman Curialis. Doubtless in the long run it made little difference to the miserable provincial whether he was at the mercy of a Lombard chieftain or of the fiscal vampires of the Roman Empire.

Let us now glance at the political conditions prevailing in Roman Italy.

[1] Greg. *Epp.* ii. 33. [2] *Ibid.* x. 5. [3] *Ibid.* v. 38.

(*b*) *Roman Italy.*

Imperial Italy, as has been already remarked, was at this period divided into three local groups, somewhat loosely connected with each other, and having each as its centre the principal city of the district. The centre of the northern group was the city of Ravenna; the centre of the middle group was the city of Rome; and the centre of the southern group was the opulent city of Naples. The principal official in the northern group was the Exarch, who resided at Ravenna, and exercised supreme authority over the whole of Roman Italy. In the central group there was no resident official of preponderating rank and influence, for the Duke of Rome did not as yet exist,[1] and though there were always Magistri Militum moving about the district, some of whom appeared at intervals within the walls of Rome, yet these officers were not stationary, nor were they of sufficient importance to take the lead in the administration of the region. Hence, as time went on, the authority of the Pope increased, and, though the Exarch still continued to be the nominal ruler, the real power and government of the Roman district passed gradually into the hands of the Church. Again, the principal official in the southern group was the Duke of Campania, or, as he is otherwise called, the Duke of Naples, and this officer, like the Pope, owing to distance and the difficulty of communicating with Ravenna, tended to become practically independent. Of the islands, Sicily was under the jurisdiction of an independent Praetor, while Corsica and Sardinia belonged to the Exarch of Africa.

The administration of Italy at this time is a question of much difficulty. It was a period of transition. The old order was crumbling, and the new order was not as yet established. The old military-civil *régime* was rapidly giving place to one that was purely military; it was not, however, completely abandoned, but still persisted in certain districts and in certain departments of the administration. In the nature of things, of

[1] The expression "Ducatus Romae" first appears in literature in *Lib. Pont. Vita Constantini* (eighth century), but probably in the course of the seventh century the Magistri Militum at Rome became known as Duces Romae. Compare Pelag. II. *Ep.* iii.: "vel unum mag. militum et unum ducem," where, however, the term is probably used in a general sense.

course, that rigid distinction between the functions of military and civil officers, instituted by Diocletian and Constantine and confirmed by the Pragmatic Sanction of Justinian, could not subsist when the tide of the invasion swept down upon the Italian cities. The military organization then became of supreme importance. Whole tracts of country were administered according to martial law. The military commandant assumed the control of affairs, and usurped the powers which under normal conditions belonged to the civil officials. Nevertheless, civil officialdom was not abolished.[1] Prefects, Vicars, and Governors of Provinces existed still; but they were fast vanishing into the obscure background, and their place was being taken by the military functionaries on whom the salvation of Imperial Italy in the main depended.

We will deal first with the civil officers of Justinian's administration. Of these the most important were—the Pretorian Prefect of Italy, the Prefect of the City, the two Vicars, and the Praesides or Iudices Provinciarum, though these last were already on the point of extinction. Speaking generally, the function of these dignitaries in Gregory's time consisted in deciding judicial actions where the parties concerned were merely private citizens, in transacting financial business, collecting taxes, providing supplies, and possibly in keeping in repair the roads and aqueducts. Their sphere of competence had in many respects become diminished, but in the matters above specified their authority was still officially recognized.

At the head of the civil organization was the Pretorian Prefect of Italy, the most exalted of the Italian civil servants of the Emperor. Over the grandeur of this functionary, Cassiodorus had once waxed eloquent, finding his prototype in Joseph, vizier of the Pharaoh[2]; while Eusebius, in a startling comparison, had likened the relation of the Prefect with the Emperor to that of the Divine Son with His Father. In bygone times the Pretorian Prefect ranked next to the Emperor's self. He had his official insignia—the purple mandye, silver inkstand, gold pen-case, and car of honour; and upon his entry all

[1] The theory of Flavio Biondo, that Longinus abolished the civil officials, is conclusively refuted by the letters of Gregory, which prove that many of these officials still existed in his time.

[2] Cassiod. *Var.* vi. 3.

subordinate officers fell on their knees, if not on their faces, in Oriental adoration. He had the supreme control of the administration of Italy. The Vicars of the Dioceses and the Governors of the Provinces were responsible to him, and were appointed or discharged at his recommendation. As supreme judicial authority, he was a final court of appeal, "judging everywhere as sovereign representative of the Sacred Majesty," and possessing the peculiar privilege of pronouncing sentence, not from a written judgment, but by word of mouth. As supreme financial authority, again, he was charged with all matters concerning the collection and distribution of the public revenue, the salaries of officials, and the commissariat of the troops. It appears that he even possessed some kind of legislative function, being empowered to issue edicts and to terminate law-suits without appeal. In short, except in respect of military concerns, the authority of the Prefect of Italy was well-nigh unbounded.

By the appointment of an Exarch, however, the Pretorian Prefect was relieved of many of his responsibilities. In Gregory's time he had lost altogether his legislative powers,[1] while his administrative functions, though not entirely abolished, were greatly curtailed. On the other hand, he still remained the principal minister of finance in Italy,[2] and his judicial powers were yet considerable.[3] He ranked next to the Exarch,[4] and enjoyed the special title of "Eminentissimus,"[5] together with the more general one of "Excellentissimus."[6] He lived in some state at Classis, near Ravenna, kept up a large staff of petty functionaries, possessed considerable influence in the disposal of places and preferments, and called the civil officials to account, as in the old days. Thus the Pretorian Prefect was still a personage of consideration, though his power was on the

[1] In Greg. *Epp.* ix. 154, we find an Imperial edict sent, not to the Prefect, but to the Exarch.

[2] *Epp.* x. 8; xi. 16. It seems, however, that the Exarch was responsible for the pay of the troops (ix. 240). The "saccellarius" referred to in v. 39, was probably an officer of the Exarch. Sometimes the soldiers' pay was distributed by a special Imperial agent (v. 30).

[3] *Ibid.* i. 35; xi. 16.

[4] *Ibid.* v. 11: "Per excellentissimum patricium et per eminentissimum praefectum atque per alios nobiles."

[5] *Ibid.* iii. 28; v. 11.

[6] *Ibid.* i. 22, 35, 36; iii. 28.

wane, and before long became entirely absorbed in that of the Byzantine Governor at Ravenna.

Of the "Most Illustrious," "Glorious," and "Magnificent" Prefect of the City, I have already spoken in my account of Gregory's official life. Here I need only add that this official continued in existence to the close of the sixth century. To be precise, he is last heard of in the year 599, when a certain Joannes held the office[1]; after which there is no mention of the title for nearly two hundred years. In the last decade of the sixth century the City Prefect retained in his hands the greater part of the civil administration within the walls, presided in the courts over the trials of citizens, assisted the Pope in procuring and distributing the grain supply, and concerted plans of defence with the military officials. His powers, however, had become more and more limited owing to the encroachments of the Pope on the one side, and of the Magistri Militum on the other, and at the time when he disappears from our view he had become little more than a dignified minister of police, with a criminal jurisdiction.

Subordinate to the Prefects there originally existed two chlamys-robed Vicars, each with the rank of "Honourable" (Spectabilis)—one at Rome (Vicarius Urbis), who had jurisdiction over the ten southern provinces (viz. Campania, Tuscia and Umbria, Picenum Suburbicarium, Sicily, Apulia and Calabria, Bruttii and Lucania, Samnium, Sardinia, Corsica, and Valeria); and one at Milan, who governed the seven provinces of the north (Istria and Venetia, Aemilia, Liguria, Flaminia and Picenum Annonicarium, Alpes Cottiae, and the two Rhaetias). Whether these officers still existed at the close of the sixth century is doubtful. Gregory, in his correspondence, once makes use of the phrase "vicarius noster," which may possibly contain a reference to the Vicar of the City[2]: he also alludes to finance officials who acted for the Pretorian Prefect.[3] It is only fair to observe, however, that the phrase "vicarius noster" is far too ambiguous to serve as the foundation of an argument, and that

[1] Greg. *Epp.* ix. 116.

[2] *Ibid.* ix. 182: "Criscentius vicarius noster." Hartmann suggests the emendation, "v(ir) c(larissimus) filius noster."

[3] *Ibid.* ix. 5, 103; x. 8. To these references we may perhaps add *Dial.* iii. 10; iv. 52.

the financial representatives of the Prefect may have been merely special officers employed to levy tribute. Nevertheless, it is not improbable that the Vicars still existed, though with shrunken dioceses and diminished functions. If so, the Northern Vicar would have his head-quarters at Genoa, while the Vicar of the City would continue to reside in Rome. Both would be now occupied chiefly, if not entirely, with matters of finance.

The Governors of Provinces—the Praesides, or Correctores of the fourth century, or, as they were called in Justinian's epoch, the Iudices Provinciarum—had not quite died out in Italy in the last decade of the sixth century. We know from Gregory's letters that there still existed a Iudex of Campania, resident apparently at Naples.[1] A Iudex of Samnium is also mentioned, but this last, owing presumably to the incorporation of his province into the duchy of Benevento, had retired to Sicily, where he lived in such poverty that the Pope allowed him an annual pension of four solidi.[2] We hear also of Iudices at Ravenna.[3] But it seems that the civil administration of these provincial governors had passed away, and even their purely judicial functions must have been greatly limited through the extension of the jurisdiction of bishops and the growing practice of settling disputes by arbitration. Shorn of their dignities, the Iudices had become mere insignificant officials, and we find Gregory himself issuing his "orders"[4] to one of them in a tone of calm superiority which he would never have dared to assume towards any political personage of the least importance. By the beginning of the seventh century the old Governors of Provinces had completely disappeared, and after that the title Iudex is applied to officials only in a general sense.

In the foregoing account I have dealt only with the heads of the old Italian civil service. The minor civil functionaries need not be discussed, for these were but administrative agents and continued to discharge their duties under the direction of

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 66; iii. 1, 2, 15.

[2] *Ibid.* ii. 38.

[3] *Ibid.* v. 19. Here, however, the term seems to be used in a general sense, as also in *Epp.* v. 39, 40; vi. 61; viii. 2; ix. 104; x. 5. There was a Iudex (v. 38), or Praeses (ix. 195; xi. 12), in Sardinia; and Iudices are also heard of in Africa (i. 74; xi. 7).

[4] *Ibid.* iii. 1, 2.

the new military masters. Except for a change in the chiefs of the departments, the ancient system continued with but little alteration. Taxes must be collected, justice administered, and finance organized even under military rule, and therefore the army of minor agents — chartularies, judicial assessors, accountants, paymasters, chancellors, notaries, and clerks—were active in the accustomed routine long after the Prefects, Vicars, and Iudices had suffered effacement. As for the latter, they are on the point of disappearing. There was no room for them in the Rome of the Middle Ages. And though at a later time their classic titles were in some instances revived, the antique functionaries who once had borne them were not restorable.

We pass now to the discussion of the military hierarchy. Like the civilians, the military potentates were ranged in a carefully graduated scale of rank. Just as, on the one hand, we find Prefects, Vicars, and Governors of Provinces, so on the other we get, each with their appropriate dignities and functions, —the Exarch, the Duces and Magistri Militum, and the Comites and Tribuni. We may briefly consider these officials in the order of their standing.

Supreme above all, both civil and military, was the Most Excellent Exarch.[1] Ever since the time of Narses, the Exarch—though not called by that title before the days of Smaragdus[2]—exercised a viceregal authority throughout Imperial Italy. As head of the civil service, he superseded the Pretorian Prefect; as chief of the army, he held all the troops in Italy at his absolute command. He appointed to all military, and possibly to all civil, offices. He could make peace or war on his own initiative. The judicature, the administration, and—at least ultimately—the finances were under his control. He interfered

[1] The list of Exarchs during our period is as follows: Longinus, 567–585; Smaragdus, 585–589; Romanus, 589–597; Callinicus, 597–602; Smaragdus, 602–611.

[2] Theophanes, indeed, calls Narses ἔξαρχος Ῥωμαίων (*A. M.* 6044), but, as Diehl says: "Le mot ἔξαρχος Ῥωμαίων semble avoir ici tout simplement le sense 'général en chef' qu'il a ailleurs dans Théophane et n'a nullement la valeur d'un titre officiel" (*Études sur l'Administration Byzantine*). Pelagius II. is the first Western writer who uses the title "Exarchus" (Labbe *Conc.* v. 938). Longinus is called "Praefectus Ravennae" in Paul. Diac. *H. L.* ii. 29. Narses' official title seems to have been "the Patrician."

even with ecclesiastical matters, though he had not as yet the right of confirming the Papal elections. His power, indeed, over the lives and fortunes of the Italian subjects was limited only by three things—the uncertain tenure of his office, the liability to be overlooked and checked by extraordinary envoys sent from Constantinople, and the right of appeal from the Exarch to the Emperor. These, however, were but slight limitations to what was for practical purposes an absolute despotism. The Exarch was dignified by the title of "Patrician," and not unfrequently held some important post in the Imperial Household. He resided at Ravenna, where he imitated on a small scale the elaborate ceremonial of the court at Constantinople. He was addressed by his subordinates in the language of exaggerated compliment, and his approach was the signal for Oriental prostrations, from which act of servility even the highest dignitaries were not exempt. When he made a state visit to any of the cities, the bishop and all the foremost citizens came out to escort him, and vied with one another in doing him honour. Endowed with such great powers and privileges, a capable and resolute Exarch might have pursued his ambition to almost any lengths, not without lasting effects on the history of Italy. Curiously enough, however, the early Exarchs were an inefficient set of men. With the exception of Narses (who did not bear the title) and of Smaragdus, not one of them gave proof of real ability or distinction. Surrounded by their cringing courtiers, these magnificent Byzantine satraps displayed to the world a sorry spectacle of muddle and mismanagement, and at the same time, by so doing, afforded the Popes a splendid opportunity of asserting themselves in the sphere of Italian politics. Thus the ineptitude of the Viceroys was the strength of the Church; and it was no idle claim that Gregory put forward, when he boldly asserted that he was superior in rank even to the all-powerful Governor.[1]

Next in dignity below the Exarch came the Duces and Magistri Militum. These two offices may be here considered together, although it is not strictly correct to say that the titles are interchangeable. The Dux and the Magister Militum were both of them military officers; but while the former was a general who at the same time exercised civil administrative

[1] *Epp.* ii. 45.

functions over a defined area, the latter was a general pure and simple, without administrative competence. The Dux was thus a military lieutenant-governor of the Exarch, in charge of a district; the Magister Militum was merely a commander of a division of the forces. Hence, while a single district could have but one Dux, there might be as many as four Magistri Militum stationed within the same ducal area.[1] Such being the strict distinction between the offices, we nevertheless often find the same person addressed by both titles; for a Dux might leave his district and serve elsewhere as a Magister Militum, while, conversely, a Magister Militum might undertake the administration of a district in addition to his military duties, and so become a Dux. Thus the titles were frequently confused, and often both were applied to the same individual.

In Gregory's letters only two Imperial Duces in Italy are expressly mentioned—these being named sometimes after the city in which they had their head-quarters (*e.g.* Rimini,[2] Naples[3]), sometimes after the province which they administered (*e.g.* Campania[4]). We cannot doubt, however, that of the many Magistri Militum here referred to, some discharged ducal functions.[5] In Istria, for example, there was a military governor entrusted with the general administration and directly responsible to the Exarch—that is, in all essential respects, a Dux.[6] Again, at Oderzo in Venetia there was a certain "Patricius," whose powers appear to be of the ducal order.[7] So also the Magistri Militum stationed in important towns like Perugia and Sipontum, were doubtless in reality Duces, though they were not called by the title. In the territory of Rome, although we meet with several Magistri Militum in Gregory's correspondence,[8] yet none of them was known as Dux Romae; nor does it seem probable that a Magister Militum with ducal prerogatives but without the title resided within the city walls.[9] It is certainly possible

[1] *E.g.* in the Roman district, in 592, Maurice, Vitalian, Aldio, and another, probably Castus (Greg. *Epp.* ii. 32, 33).

[2] *Epp.* i. 56. Probably the Bahan of ix. 99 was also Duke of Rimini.

[3] *Ibid.* xiv. 10; cf. ii. 45.

[4] *Ibid.* x. 5.

[5] See *e.g. ibid.* ix. 53, 124, 159, 162.

[6] *Ibid.* ix. 160.

[7] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iv. 38.

[8] *Epp.* ii. 7, 32, 33; iii. 51; v. 30, 36.

[9] See Hartmann's note (6) on *Epp.* v. 30.

that the territory beyond the city was administered by one of the Magistri Militum acting in the capacity of Dux. But this is mere conjecture, unsupported by a shred of evidence.

The Dux was supreme within the area of his command. He disposed the troops and controlled the civil officers, dispensed justice, managed the finances, and interfered even in matters ecclesiastical. He had his official staff—his chartulary, notary, major-domus, and the rest, and aped the state of the Exarch, just as the latter aped the state of the Emperor. The Dux, indeed, on a small scale and in respect of his own district, had a position similar to that which the Exarch enjoyed in respect of the whole of Italy. He was appointed by the Exarch, to whom also he rendered his accounts, but he tended more and more to emancipate himself from the Exarch's authority and to become independent.

Lastly, below the Duces and Magistri Militum rank the Tribuni and Comites. These last titles appear to have been practically interchangeable.[1] The Tribune or Count was a military officer with civil powers, appointed by the Exarch to take charge of a single town, and administer it as Governor.[2] On one extraordinary occasion a Tribune was sent by the Pope to look after the city of Naples.[3] The position and influence of these officers, however, in comparison with that of the Duces or Magistri Militum, was insignificant.

I will close this brief account of the political organization of Imperial Italy with a few remarks upon the survival of the Roman Senate and of the local Curiae.

First, as to the Roman Senate. "Whatever is the flower of the human race, the Senate ought to possess it; and as the citadel is the crown of the city, so should your order be the ornament of all other ranks."[4] The senatorial ideal, thus expressed by Cassiodorus, can scarcely have survived in reality after the Gothic War. The Senators who escaped the Gothic massacres and reassembled in the ancient Roman Senate House, can have been but a poor remnant of a once august body; and even of these few a considerable proportion

[1] See *Epp.* i. 13; vii. 3.
[2] For instances, see *Dial.* iv. 27; *Epp.* viii. 19; ix. 53, 71, 121, 174, 200, 205.
[3] *Epp.* ii. 34; cf. ii. 14.
[4] Cassiod. *Var.* i. 13.

doubtless took advantage of Justinian's permission to migrate to Constantinople, or to settle in Sicily and elsewhere. Nevertheless, a small body, reinforced possibly by new members of plebeian extraction, did reconstitute itself as the Senatus Romanus, and was by Justinian assigned the function of superintending the weights and measures. Apparently the Senate still existed in 579, when certain Roman Senators were sent on an embassy to Constantinople.[1] From this date, however, till 757, when the word "senatus" reappears in documents,[2] history preserves a profound silence respecting the ancient Curia. From 579 onwards the Senate appears to have taken no part in any important event. It is not mentioned as participating even in the Papal elections. During the negotiations between Gregory and Agilulf, in 599, not a word is said of the concurrence or interference of the Senate. Among the Papal envoys to Constantinople, Ravenna, Pavia, or other courts, among the plenipotentiaries appointed to settle affairs of war or of peace, among the recipients of the charity of the Roman Church, among Pope Gregory's personal advisers, friends, or correspondents,—there does not appear the name of a single member of the Roman Senate. The venerable assembly is absolutely ignored. Only in one extract from an unknown chronicler (repeated by John the Deacon) it is stated that when the images of the Emperor Phocas and his wife Leontia were brought to Rome, in 603, they were carried into the great hall of the Lateran, amid acclamations "ab omni clero vel senatu."[3] But this is, to say the least, a very dubious piece of evidence to set against the significant silence of all historians.

Had, then, the Senate ceased to exist? This is at once the simplest and most satisfactory way of accounting for the extraordinary reticence of our authorities. Surely it is incredible that so venerable an institution, had it continued to subsist even in the form of a mere civic corporation, should have been so completely ignored. The theory of its extinction alone explains the reserve of the historians. At the same time, this theory

[1] See above, p. 122.

[2] Paul I. writes: "Pippino Regi Francorum et Patricio Romanorum omnis Senatus atque universa Populi generalitas" (*Cod. Carol.* 13).

[3] Greg. *Epp.* xiii. 1.

is rendered the more probable by the positive statements of Agnellus of Ravenna and Gregory the Great. Of these, the former reports that after the coming of the Lombards the Roman Senate gradually sank into decay[1]; while Gregory, in one of his homilies exclaims, "Where is the Senate? Where are the People? . . . All the glory of earthly dignity has expired from the city. All her greatness has vanished. . . . Because there is no Senate, the People perished."[2] This last is admittedly a rhetorical passage. But could Gregory have spoken thus had the Senate been still flourishing, though only as a municipal corporation? And would not his words have more point if we imagine them applied to a venerable institution, which, though possibly not even yet quite dead, was at least *in articulo mortis*, doomed to vanish utterly within the space of a few years? This seems to be the most reasonable conclusion. The Senate received a death-blow during the Gothic War. It lingered on, however, for a time—certainly till 579—but about the year 590 it passed away for ever. The reappearance of the name in documents of the eighth century was probably nothing more than the revival of a classic form and title, associated with the glorious age of Rome, and adopted at a time when that city had shaken herself free from the yoke of Byzantine despotism. The old name of dignity was then applied to the Roman aristocracy as a title of honour, but it had no real significance. The ancient society of the Conscript Fathers was dissolved, and was not reconstituted.

While the Roman Senate thus became extinct, the municipal constitutions of the Italian towns lasted on well into the seventh century.[3] The chains forged by Theodosius and Justinian for the wealthy provincials were too strong to be broken even by such an event as the Lombard invasion. The unfortunate curiales, condemned by the Imperial Government to a service that was worse than slavery, were unable, even in the

[1] Agnellus *Lib. Pont. Eccl. Ravenn.* 95: "Deinde paulatim Romanus defecit senatus, et post Romanorum libertas cum triumpho sublata est."

[2] *Hom. in Ezech.* ii. 6, § 22.

[3] It is not certain that the "ordo," mentioned in the inscription of many of Gregory's letters (*e.g. Epp.* i. 56, 58, 78; ii. 5, 12, 14; iii. 11, 14; v. 122; ix. 81, etc.), refers to the local curia. But in any case we have other evidence to prove that these curiae still existed.

ferment of Italian affairs, to shake off their oppressive yoke or rid themselves of their obligations to the Imperial treasury. Gregory himself acquiesced in their oppression, and debarred from ordination all who were under liability to the Curia.[1]

In Gregory's correspondence reference is made to at least two municipal functionaries—the Defensor and the Curator Civitatis. Of these the former is mentioned by Gregory only thrice.[2] He seems to have exercised judicial functions, and the public causes of his corporation were entrusted to his care. Records were kept of his judicial acts and decisions. He held office for two years, and seems to have been the most important magnate of the Curia. The Curator Civitatis, called also Major Populi and Patronus Civitatis, is also referred to by Gregory. This official corresponded somewhat to our modern mayor. He presided over the Curia, superintended all the municipal affairs of his town, regulated the markets, provided supplies, and looked after the interests of the citizens.[3] He was also, it appears, concerned in matters of local finance. In Gregory's time he was still a person of considerable influence, and we find the Pope treating with him about making a peace,[4] and again requesting him to provide a military escort for the wife of a friend.[5] These officials, however, like the civil dignitaries of higher rank, were being gradually superseded by the military and ecclesiastical authorities.[6] Though they continued to discharge their functions within a limited sphere, they can scarcely have been a very important factor in the life of the provincial towns. The real forces of the time were the Army and the Church.

I have endeavoured to give some short account of the political condition of Italy at the close of the sixth century. This account was necessary for the correct understanding of the events of Gregory's later life. I now resume the biography of Gregory, taking up the thread at the year 586, the date of his return to Rome from Constantinople.

[1] Greg. *Epp.* ii. 37; cf. v. 26.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 39 (Campania); ix. 155 (Istria); ix. 198 (Lilybaeum).

[3] See Cassiod. *Var.* vii. 12.

[4] *Epp.* ix. 44.

[5] *Ibid.* ix. 116.

[6] For the encroachments of the Bishop of Naples on the rights of the Major Populi, see *Epp.* ix. 47, 53, 76.

CHAPTER VIII

GREGORY THE ABBAT

Some time after his return to Rome in 586, Gregory was elected Abbat of St. Andrew's Monastery. His predecessor, the Maximianus of the stormy voyage, doubtless resigned in his favour, feeling himself unfit to be the superior of one who in knowledge, practical ability, and personal sanctity was so far beyond him.[1] At all events, Gregory undertook the government of the community, and his rule, though popular, was characterized by extreme severity. An authentic anecdote illustrates the conscientious strictness of the abbat, and at the same time gives us an insight into the beliefs entertained by Gregory and his contemporaries concerning the state of purgatory and the efficacy of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. The story is as follows.[2]

[1] That Gregory, shortly before his election to the pontificate, was abbat of his monastery, is clear from the narrative in *Dial.* iv. 55. The same is implied by the story in Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 10. On the other hand, when Gregory was at Constantinople Maximianus was abbat (Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 33), and Maximianus apparently did not become bishop of Syracuse till 591 (*AA. SS.*, 9 *Jun.*), for John reckons Maximianus among the friends with whom Gregory was intimate after he became Pope (*Vita* ii. 11), and it seems unlikely that Gregory would have appointed Peter the Subdeacon his Vicar in Sicily in 590 (Greg. *Epp.* i. 1) if Maximianus had then been bishop of Syracuse, especially as he conferred the honour on Maximianus in October 591 (*Epp.* ii. 8). It seems probable, then, that Maximianus resigned in favour of Gregory, though, whether he did so immediately on the latter's return to Rome, or at some later date, we cannot say for certain. John indeed remarks that Gregory was a monk under the rule of Maximianus (*Vita* i. 6), but John's account of Gregory's monastic life is confused, and Gregory himself mentions only Valentio as his abbat (*Dial.* iv. 21), and never hints that he was subject to Maximianus. This silence on the part of Gregory leads us to think that Maximianus resigned soon after Gregory's return to Rome, though he may have continued in office for some months after that event, and so have given some colour of truth to John's statement.

[2] Greg. *Dial.* iv. 55; cf. Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 15, 16. The story of Justus is perhaps the original of the somewhat similar tale found in the *Pratum Spirituale* of Moschus c. 192, quoted by Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 45.

There was in the monastery a certain monk named Justus, who was skilled in medicine, and had often kindly ministered to Gregory during his frequent illnesses. This man, having fallen grievously ill, and believing himself to be on the point of death, confessed to his natural brother, Copiosus, that he possessed three golden crowns hidden away in the medicine-chest. Gregory was horrified when he heard of this, for he considered that to possess money, in contempt of the monastic law of poverty, was a grave sin. He therefore determined to make a signal example of the culprit, and sending for Pretiosus the prior, he said to him, "Go and provide that none of the brethren visit Justus on his death-bed, nor let any give him a word of comfort. But when his hour is come, and he asks for the brethren, let his carnal brother tell him that all the monks detest him for the money which he hid, that so at least in the hour of death he may have sorrow for his deed, and his sorrow may cleanse his heart from sin. When he is dead, his body must not be buried with the rest of the monks, but you must make a grave for him in some dung-hill, and cast in the body there, and throw on the top the three crowns he left behind him, crying all together, 'Thy money perish with thee!' and so put earth upon him." Gregory's orders were obeyed. Justus died in great agony of mind, and was buried in the way prescribed. And all the good monks were so excessively scared by his dreadful fate, that they began to turn out from their cells all manner of worthless little trifles which the Rule permitted them to keep, fearing lest inadvertently they might be retaining something which would bring upon them a similar punishment.

Thirty days after the death of Justus the stern abbat began to relent a little. So he sent for Prior Pretiosus, and said to him, "It is some time now since our departed brother has been in fiery torment, and therefore we ought to show him some charity and try if we can procure his deliverance. Go, then, and for the next thirty days offer the Sacrifice for him, so that no day pass on which the Saving Victim be not offered for his forgiveness." The prior, as before, carried out the abbat's orders, and meanwhile Gregory, amid his other cares, forgot about the matter. One night, however, the spirit of Justus appeared to his brother Copiosus, and being questioned as to his state, replied, "Hitherto I have been in sore case,

but now it is well with me, for to-day I received the communion." Copiosus ran to Gregory in great joy, and told him what he had seen and heard; and when they compared dates they discovered that the vision occurred on the thirtieth day on which mass had been said for the repose of the dead man's soul. "Thus," says Gregory, "it was clearly evident that the deceased was delivered from his punishment by means of the Saving Oblation."

To those who do not bear in mind Gregory's belief respecting future punishment, his conduct on this occasion may well appear savage and inhuman. But probably none of his contemporaries who heard the story would have regarded it in this light. For a monk to hoard up money was not merely a violation of a monastic regulation; it was a violation of a fundamental principle of monasticism, and showed that the offender had never truly adopted the spirit of the life he was supposed to lead, and was therefore deserving of condign punishment both in this world and the next. The energetic measures taken by Gregory—so men would argue—awakened the remorse of the culprit, and the sorrow of his dying hours saved him from a sorrow which would have been eternal.[1] Hence the remarkable comment on the story, attributed in the *Dialogues* to Peter, would probably have represented the opinion of most sixth-century churchmen: "This is indeed a wonderful and extremely pleasant tale!"

Under Gregory's rule the Monastery of St. Andrew became renowned as a school of saints. Many men who afterwards became distinguished were domiciled within its walls; among them Maximianus the future bishop of Syracuse and Papal Vicar in Sicily, Marinianus who was made archbishop of Ravenna, Sabinus who became bishop of Gallipoli, and Augustine the Apostle of England. Of the less important monks the names of two are preserved to us by Gregory himself, who

[1] The best commentary on Gregory's conduct towards Justus is given by himself, when preaching on Joseph's conduct to his brethren (*Hom. in Ezech.* ii. 9, § 19). "Severus ad fratres revertitur, ut cruciatu eorum animus a culpa liberaretur . . . O tormenta misericordiae! Cruciat et amat . . . Detersa est ira quae apparebat et non erat; ostensa misericordia quae erat et non apparebat. Sic vir sanctus facinus fratrum et dimisit et vindicavit. Sic in vigore clementiam tenuit, ut delinquentibus fratribus nec sine ultione pius existeret nec sine pietate districtus."

relates some remarkable visions with which they were favoured. "There was living with me in my monastery," he writes in the *Dialogues*,[1] "a certain brother named Antonius, who daily with many tears longed for the joys of the heavenly fatherland. While he meditated upon the Holy Scriptures with the utmost earnestness and with strong fervour of desire, he sought to gain from them not words of knowledge, but tears of penitence, that his soul, roused and inflamed by their holy influence, might leave the things of earth and soar in contemplation to the heavenly country. To him it was said in a vision of the night, 'Make ready and depart, for the Lord hath commanded thee.' And when he answered that he had no means wherewith to make the journey, he heard at once the reply, 'If thou art thinking of thy sins, they are forgiven thee.' This he heard once, and while he still trembled with great awe, on another night he was again admonished in the same words. Then five days later he was attacked with fever and died, while all the brethren wept and prayed around him." A similar story is related of a young monk named John, who, falling sick, beheld in a vision an old man come to him and touch him with a wand, saying, "Rise up, for thou shalt not die of this sickness; but prepare thyself, for thou art not long for this world." Though the physicians had given him up, John recovered, and for two years served God with great devotion. Then one day, after he had been assisting at the funeral of one of the brethren, he fancied that he heard his name called from the newly filled grave. Ten days afterwards he sickened of an ague and departed this life.

The biographer John the Deacon has several stories of miraculous events which occurred in St. Andrew's—how a monk who had committed a theft was tormented by a demon until he confessed; how another, who meditated flight, was checked by a vision of an old man who set a black dog at him; how a third, who entertained a similar design, was vexed by a demon whenever he attempted to enter the oratory; how two monks, who escaped and hid in some crypts near the Flaminian Gate, were discovered by means of the horses of the pursuers, who could not be induced to pass the spot.[2] But these events, however we explain them, did not take place during the period of Gregory's residence; for the same stories are related by

[1] Greg. *Dial.* iv. 47.

[2] Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 11–14.

Gregory himself when Pope, and he gives them on the authority of the abbat of the monastery.[1]

While Gregory occupied himself with matters of discipline and religious observance, he did not neglect, or allow his monks to neglect, the study of sacred learning. Much of his own spare time was spent in meditating on the Holy Scriptures, and he endeavoured to educate his brethren in divine knowledge by delivering a series of informal lectures, in the course of which he expounded the greater portion of the Old Testament, viz. the Heptateuch, the Books of Kings, the Prophets, the Book of Proverbs, and the Song of Solomon.[2] A diligent young student named Claudius took shorthand notes of these lectures, which he afterwards transcribed in full, with a view to publication. Gregory, however, finding that his words had been greatly misrepresented, requested that all the copies should be sent to him for correction.[3] But if, as seems probable, he intended to revise and publish them, he never found time to execute his purpose. The extant Commentaries on the First Book of Kings and on the Song of Solomon can scarcely be by his hand. The former, at any rate, probably belongs to a much later date, though it is just possible that the latter was based on the notes of Gregory's lectures taken by Claudius.[4]

[1] Greg. *Epp.* xi. 26.

[2] It is remarkable that Gregory, who commented upon so many parts of the Bible, never seems to have expounded any of the Epistles or the Acts of the Apostles. This was doubtless due partly to the existence of good commentaries on these books, but also partly to Gregory's love of allegorizing, which could not so well be gratified in dealing with the Epistles.

[3] Greg. *Epp.* xii. 6: "Praeterea quia isdem carissimus quondam filius meus Claudius aliqua me loquente de proverbiis, de canticis canticorum, de prophetis, de libris quoque regum et de eptatico audierat, quae ego scripto tradere prae infirmitate non potui, ipse ea suo sensu dictavit, ne oblivione deperirent, ut apto tempore haec eadem mihi inferret et emendatius dictarentur. Quae cum mihi legisset, inveni dictorum meorum sensum valde inutilius fuisse permutatum. Unde necesse est, ut tua experientia omni excusatione atque mora cessante ad eius monasterium accedat, convenire fratres faciat et sub omni veritate, quantascunque de diversis scripturae cartulas detulit, ad medium deducant, quas tu suscipe et mihi celerrime transmitte." (Compare Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 70.)

[4] For a discussion as to the authorship of these works, see Migne *P. L.* lxxix. 9–18, 467–472. The Benedictine editors do not succeed in confuting the arguments of Gussanvillaeus, who has shown conclusively that the Commentary on Kings cannot with any likelihood be attributed to Gregory himself. Their own view, that it was the work of Claudius, is not supported by

One important literary undertaking, however, Gregory completed at this time. This was the editing of the lectures on the Book of Job, which he had delivered in Constantinople. In the dedication, addressed to his friend Leander of Seville, Gregory gives an interesting account of the origin and composition of the book. "When I was in Constantinople," he writes,[1] "it seemed good to the brethren and to you, my friend, to urge me to explain the Book of the blessed Job, and to lay open the deep mysteries it contains, so far as the Truth should inspire me with the power of doing so. And you laid this additional charge upon me, that I should not only unravel the words of the history in their allegorical sense, but that I should also turn the allegorical sense into a moral exercise, and (what was still harder) crown the several meanings with testimonies, and when those testimonies were difficult to understand, that I should disentangle them also by an additional explanation. At first I despaired, owing to the difficulty of the work. But then I raised my hopes to Him who *made the tongues of them that cannot speak eloquent*, and who hath marked the undistinguishable brute brayings of an ass with the intelligible measures of human speech. So I took courage, and though the life of those to whom I was compelled to give my interpretation was far beyond me, yet I thought it no harm that the leaden pipe should supply streams of water for the service of men. Whereupon without delay I delivered the former parts of the book in the presence of the brethren assembled to hear me, and in the latter part, finding that I had time then at my disposal, I used dictation. Finally, when I had more time, I corrected and arranged in books all that had been taken down as I delivered it in lecture, adding much, omitting a little and leaving some as it was. For when I was giving the second part by dictation I at the same time carefully considered the style of the first part, harmonizing the two styles into a consistent whole. I must admit, however, that I have left the third portion of the work for the most part as I delivered it by word of mouth,

convincing evidence. The case of the Exposition of the Song of Solomon is more doubtful, and it is not impossible that this was indeed the composition of Claudius based on notes of Gregory's lectures. At any rate, the work is mentioned by Ildefonsus, and cited by Paterius, and it was probably published, if not during Gregory's lifetime, at least soon after his death.

[1] Greg. *Epp.* v. 53*a*.

because the brethren, by drawing away my attention to other things, prevented my correcting it with any degree of exactness." Respecting the method of his exposition, Gregory further writes: "You must know that there are some parts which we explain historically, others we search out by allegory, investigating the symbolical meaning, in others we open out only moral lessons, allegorically conveyed, while there are some few which we discuss with special care in all these ways together, exploring them by a threefold method.[1] For first we lay the foundations in history; then, by pursuing a symbolical sense, we erect an intellectual edifice to be a stronghold of faith; and lastly, by the grace of moral instruction, we as it were paint the fabric with fair colours. . . . For the Word of God both exercises the understanding of the wise by its deeper mysteries, and also by its superficial lessons nurses the simple-minded. It presents openly that wherewith the little ones may be fed; it keeps in secret that whereby men of loftier range may be rapt in admiration. It is, as it were, a kind of river both shallow and deep, in which the lamb may find a footing and the elephant float at large." Gregory concludes his dedicatory epistle with an apology for the style. He pleads that the book was composed when he was labouring under illness. "For many a long year I have been afflicted with frequent pains in the bowels, and the powers of my stomach are so broken that I am always in bad health. I also suffer from a constant succession of slow fevers." These bodily ailments have affected to some extent his intellectual powers. "For what is the body but the organ of the mind? However proficient a musician may be, he cannot extract melody from an instrument which is out of order. Only grating sounds proceed from a cracked pipe." Not that Gregory troubled himself about an ornate and polished style. He writes: "I beg that in going through this work you will not look for the foliage of eloquence, for by the Sacred Oracles commentators are expressly debarred from the vanity of empty wordiness, in that it is forbidden to plant a grove in the temple of God. And we all know that when a rank crop shows stalks

[1] Paul. Diac. *Vita* 8, writes: "Eundem librum quomodo iuxta litteram intelligendus, qualiter ad Christi ecclesiaeque sacramenta referendus, quo sensu unicuique fidelium sit aptandus, per triginta quinque librorum seriem miranda ratione perdocuit."

that abound in leaves, the grains of the ears are least filled and swelling. Therefore I have not condescended to observe that art of speaking, which is conveyed by rules of worldly training, for, as the tenour of this epistle will show, I do not avoid collisions of metacism or confusion of barbarisms, and I despise the observance of the position, force, or government of prepositions. For I account it very unseemly to submit the words of the Divine Oracle to the rules of Donatus." With this frank repudiation of literary elegancies, the austere commentator concludes his dedication.

The *Magna Moralia*, or Exposition of the Book of Job, is a very remarkable work, and a veritable treasure-house of sixth-century theology and ethic. It is divided into thirty-five books, and was originally edited in six volumes. The theology therein expounded will be dealt with at length in the Third Book of the present biography. Here it is sufficient to say that, as a Commentary in the modern sense of the term, the *Magna Moralia* is well-nigh worthless. Gregory read the Book of Job in Latin, partly according to the older and partly according to the later version. Of the original language he knew nothing; of Oriental manners and modes of thought he had no conception. He never seems to have realized that the book was a poem, or to have made the slightest allowance for poetical expressions, images, and metaphors. He understood it all with gross literalness. And yet at the same time beneath the letter he discovered, or fancied that he discovered, a wealth of esoteric meaning. As Milman says: "The Book of Job, according to Gregory, comprehended in itself all natural, all Christian theology, and all morals. It was at once a true and wonderful history, an allegory containing in its secret sense the whole theory of the Christian Church and Christian sacraments, and a moral philosophy applicable to all mankind." In other words, each paragraph of the book was to Gregory merely a peg on which to hang disquisitions on all manner of subjects—theological, philosophical, and moral. The poem was the running text of a series of sermons, many of them very much off the point.

The form of the book disgusts the modern reader. It is not the style of writing—the rudeness of which was perhaps exaggerated by Gregory in his dedication—so much as the endless allegorizing, the twisting of every word and phrase into

a symbol of hidden truth, that is so inexpressibly wearisome. At the commencement, perhaps, we are interested in the author's ingenuity of interpretation, as, for example, when he informs us that Job's seven sons typify the twelve apostles, because 7 expresses the perfection of spiritual gifts, and is obtained by adding 3 to 4, which numbers when multiplied make 12; or when we hear that the three daughters represent the weaker multitudes of the faithful who believe in the Trinity, or the three orders of the Church (the clergy, the continent, and the married); or when we read that seven thousand sheep typify the Jews who have been led from the Law to the pastures of Grace. But when this system is consistently applied through thirty-five books, it soon becomes intolerable. Hence from the eighth century onwards many attempts have been made to edit the *Morals* in the form of Compendia or Epitomes, which should preserve the most valuable portions of the Commentary in a handy and readable form. The most celebrated of these epitomes was compiled by Odo of Cluny. Such compilations, however, have invariably been found more or less unsatisfactory.

But whatever opinion modern students may form of Gregory's masterpiece, there cannot be the slightest question of its great popularity from Gregory's time onwards through the Middle Ages.[1] So soon as it was published it was received with immense enthusiasm. The archbishop of Ravenna, Marinianus, ordered that portions of it should be publicly read at Vigils—a proceeding of which Gregory disapproved. "I am not pleased to hear it," he wrote[2]; "for the book is not a popular one, and with an uninstructed audience is likely to do more harm than good. Tell Marinianus to have read instead the Commentaries on the Psalms, which are best adapted for moulding the minds of secular persons to good habits. I do not wish that in my lifetime anything I may happen to have composed should become generally known." After Gregory's death, however, this practice was resumed. The *Magna Moralia* became a favourite text-book of Christian doctrine. Manuscripts were

[1] Hear, for instance, Isidore's opinion (*De Vir Illustr.* 40): "In quibus quidem (voluminibus) quanta mysteria sacramentorum aperiantur, quantaque sint in amorem vitae aeternae praecepta, vel quanta clareant ornamenta verborum, nemo sapiens explicare valebit, etiam si omnes artus eius vertantur in linguas."

[2] Greg. *Epp.* xii. 6.

multiplied, epitomes compiled; by the twelfth century numerous translations had been made and circulated, and for the next five or six hundred years the commentary was regarded as indispensable for every well-furnished theological library. Nor can we wonder at the success of the work. The *Magna Moralia* is a mine of theology, and the unambiguous matter-of-fact way in which the dogmas are dealt with commended it to many who were unable to follow the subtle reasonings of Augustine. Hence it soon became a standard authority, and throughout the Middle Ages there was perhaps no work on theology more generally esteemed or more diligently studied.

It is probably to this period of Gregory's life that we must refer the celebrated incident of the meeting with the English slave-boys in the Roman market-place.[1] In our remote island of the northern sea much fighting had been going on. Aella, king of Northumbrian Deira, had been struggling successfully to establish his supremacy over the neighbouring Bernicians. In these wars many captives had been taken on both sides, who,

[1] The references for this incident are *S. Gallen Life* 9; Baeda *H. E.* ii. 1; Paul. Diac. *Vita* 17; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 21. A very corrupt version of the story will be found in Ethelwerd *Chron.* ii. 1. The story represents an English tradition (*S. Gallen Life*, "Est igitur fidelium narratio . . ."; Baeda, "Nec silentio praetereunda opinio, quae de beato Gregorio traditione maiorum ad nos usque perlata est . . ."). Paul and John copy from the English authorities. Gregory himself nowhere alludes to the incident; and it is strange that, if he was really fond of punning on names, he does not indulge his fancy in his familiar letters (see, however, *Dial.* ii. Proleg.: "gratia Benedictus et nomine"; and possibly *Epp.* iii. 52). On the whole, the evidence appears to be too weak to establish the historical truth of the story, although there is nothing improbable in the conjecture that Gregory first became acquainted with the English through some slaves offered for sale in Rome. As regards the alleged date of the incident, the *S. Gallen Life* 10, and Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 22, place it in the pontificate of Benedict I. (574–578); Paul. Diac. *Vita* 19 places it in that of Pelagius II. (578–590). As Gregory was in Constantinople between 579 and 586, the incident, if historical, must have occurred either (1) 574–579, or (2) 586–588, which last was the year of King Aella's death. I am inclined to favour the later date, because (*a*) the *S. Gallen Life*, which places the event in the pontificate of Benedict, seems to confuse Benedict with Pelagius II., speaking of the former as Gregory's "precessorem pontificatus sui"; (*b*) this confusion was remarked and rectified by Paul; (*c*) John's mistake arose through a careless reading of the *S. Gallen Life*, in which he found the name Benedict, but did not observe the author's confusion of Benedict with Pelagius; (*d*) Gregory at the earlier date can scarcely have been a personage of such importance and notoriety as to create a panic in Rome by reason of his departure.

according to the usage of the country, were either killed or sold into slavery. Thus it chanced that some time between the years 586 and 588, some English boys, subjects of Aella—three in number, according to the Canterbury tradition—were publicly offered for sale by some Jew merchant in the market-place at Rome.[1] It happened that on that day Abbat Gregory, with a few of his monks, was passing through the Forum, and was struck with admiration on beholding the white skin and golden hair of the handsome slaves. He stopped and asked the slave-dealer whence they came. The Jew replied that they had been brought from Britain, where all the people had fair complexions like them. On further interrogation he added that they were pagans. Gregory sighed deeply and exclaimed, "Alas! alas! that beings with such bright faces should be slaves of the prince of darkness! that with outward form so lovely the mind should be sick and void of inward grace!" Then followed the famous dialogue. "What is the name of their nation?" "Angles." "Good," quoth the abbat, "they have the faces of angels, and should be co-heirs with the angels in heaven. From what province do they come?" "From Deira." "Deira! Yea, verily; they shall be saved from God's ire, and called to the mercy of Christ. How call you the king of that country?" "Aella." "Then must Alleluia be sung in Aella's land."

The punning[2] abbat returned to his monastery. But the affair did not end in mere word-play. The bright faces of the English lads haunted him, and at length he formed the resolution of leading a mission himself into their distant unknown country.[3] He went, therefore, to Pelagius, and earnestly

[1] Baeda is the first to call them slaves; the *S. Gallen Life* does not so represent them: "Est narratio . . . Romam venisse quidam de nostra natione forma et crinibus candidati albis. Quos cum audisset venisse, iam dilexit vidisse . . . Quos quidam pulchros fuisse pueros dicunt, quidam vero crispos iuvenes et decoros" (c. 9). According to this account, Gregory addressed the Angles directly.

[2] For similar punning on names, compare Baeda *H. E.* ii. 15 (Felix); iii. 2 (Hefenfeth); *Hist. Abb.* § 1, p. 364 (Benedict); Columbanus *Epp.* 1, 5 (Leo. Vigilius); Adamnan. *Vita Columbae* ii. 39 (Libranus); Paul. Diac. *Vita Greg.* 1; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 2 (Gregorius).

[3] Very little seems to have been known of Britain. See the notice in Procopius *Bell. Goth.* iv. 20, and the curious fable there recounted of the souls of the dead, which Gallic fishermen were in the habit of transporting to Britain by night in the space of a single hour.

entreated him to sanction the undertaking. The Pope was reluctant, but gave his consent; and so one morning, with the utmost secrecy, Gregory, accompanied by a few monks, stole out of the gate of Rome and set forward on his long journey to the north. It was not fated, however, that Gregory should himself set foot in Britain. On the third day after his departure the little band halted for a rest. The monks disposed themselves for a quiet siesta, and Gregory, withdrawing a little apart, took out a roll of the Scriptures and began to read. Suddenly a grasshopper alighted on the open page, and this trifling incident appeared to the abbat to be a Heaven-sent omen. "Ecce locusta!" he exclaimed. "That means, 'Loco sta.' Know, my friends, that we shall not be allowed to proceed on this journey." Almost as he spoke messengers arrived in hot haste from Pope Pelagius, with imperative orders to Gregory to return without delay. It seems that the people of Rome had taken the departure of their favourite very ill. As soon as they heard of it they flocked in great excitement to the Lateran, and began to upbraid the Pope with terrible cries: "Ah, Apostolic,[1] what hast thou done? Thou hast offended Peter. Thou hast destroyed Rome."[2] Terrified, Pelagius at once despatched messengers to recall the people's idol, ordering them, if necessary, even to use force to bring him back. But Gregory, when he read the Pope's letter, made no attempt to rebel, and returned quietly to the city which was to be henceforth his home.[3] Nevertheless, he did not forget the English. He treasured up his missionary design until he could put it into execution at a later date and by other hands.

[1] The title "Apostolicus" from about the ninth century was restricted to the Pope. The Council of Rheims, A.D. 1049, decreed "quod solus Romanae sedis Pontifex universalis ecclesiae primas esset, et Apostolicus"; and Adam Scotus (Migne *P. L.* cxviii. 394) says: "Ipsi quippe sunt principales, et maximi sedis apostolicae in ecclesia Romana successores; unde et ipsos specialiter apostolicos sancta ecclesia vocare consuevit." Before the ninth century the word, used as an epithet, was applied to any bishop.

[2] *S. Gallen Life*, 10: "Unde tale dicitur condictum fecisse (populus), ut se in tres partes divideret iuxta viam qua profectus est ad ecclesiam sancti Petri pontifex. Unaquaque autem pars eo transiente, sic proclamavit ad eum: 'Petrum offendisti, Romam destruxisti, Gregorium dimisisti.' His ergo tam terribiliter tercio audiens, concite post missis legatis fecit eum reverti."

[3] *S. Gallen Life*, 10; Baeda *H. E.* ii. 1; Paul. Diac. *Vita* 18-20; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 22-24.

During these years Gregory was occupied with many things besides the care of his monastery. He was the right-hand man of Pope Pelagius, who had frequent occasion to consult him on ecclesiastical matters.[1] He seems also to have served his master in the capacity of secretary, just as Jerome and Prosper served respectively Damasus and Leo. At any rate, we have Paul's authority[2] for stating that he was the writer of an important letter sent in Pelagius's name to the Istrian schismatics; and it seems fairly certain that, in this controversy at any rate, Gregory took a considerable share.

This Schism of the Three Chapters had been for some years a source of trouble to the Roman Church, and it continued to be a thorn in the side of the Papacy during the greater part of Gregory's own pontificate. Its origin is somewhat obscure, but if we may believe Liberatus, it was a development of an Origenistic dispute, complicated by the personal jealousies of rival churchmen.[3] Its formal commencement, however, was with an edict published by Justinian in 543 or 544, which, in the last three sections or chapters, condemned the person and writings of Theodore, bishop of Mopsuestia, the writings of Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus, "which he published in defence of the heretic Nestorius against the holy faith and the first holy synod of Ephesus and St. Cyril and his twelve chapters," and lastly "the impious letter which Ibas is alleged to have written to Maris, the Persian heretic."[4] This edict, intended to conciliate the Monophysites by anathematizing those who seemed tainted with Nestorian opinions, greatly scandalized the orthodox. For although the opinions of Theodore were notoriously erroneous, and although the writings of Theodoret and Ibas unquestionably bore a Nestorian complexion, yet the Fathers of Chalcedon had restored Theodoret to his see without exacting

[1] In Greg. *Ep.* iii. 66, the Bishop of Ravenna writes to Gregory: "Sedem apostolicam, quam antea moribus nunc etiam honore debito gubernatis."

[2] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 20.

[3] Liberatus *Breviar.* 23, 24. L. concludes thus: "Illud liquere omnibus credo, per Pelagium diaconum et Theodorum Caesareae Cappadociae episcopum, hoc scandalum in ecclesiam fuisse ingressum. Quod etiam publice ipse Theodorus clamitavit, se et Pelagium vivos incendendos, per quos hoc scandalum introivit in mundum."

[4] This edict has been lost, but its contents must have been substantially the same as those of the *Iustiniani Confessio* (Migne *P. L.* lxix. p. 226, *sqq.*).

from him a retractation of his writings against Cyril, and had actually accepted the letter of Ibas as a proof of the writer's orthodoxy, and caused it to be formally entered in the minutes of the Council. Hence Justinian's unprovoked attack upon these bishops appeared to many to be nothing less than an assault on the authority of the Fourth General Council itself.

I need not trace in detail the history of the miserable controversy which ensued on the publication of this unfortunate edict. A mere outline will be sufficient. The West rose in revolt. In Italy, Gaul, Illyricum, and particularly in Africa, the cry was raised that the Fourth Council was being overthrown.[1] The clamour and excitement were tremendous. Even Pope Vigilius, great as were his obligations to the Emperor, dared not append his signature to the odious document, which was regarded in Rome as an outrage upon the Catholic Faith. Justinian was for the moment baffled: then he determined to carry through his purpose in another way, and summoned the Pope to Constantinople.

Vigilius arrived in the Imperial city in January, 547. He was met at the gate by the Emperor, who kissed him with great demonstration of affection, and even melted into tears. A great concourse escorted the Pope through the colonnaded streets, chanting the antiphon, "Ecce advenit dominator dominus"[2]; and in the great Church of St. Sophia the Patriarch Mennas celebrated in his presence the sacred service of the mass. Vigilius, despite these compliments, remained firm for a while, refused to sign the anathemas, and even dared to excommunicate Mennas. But he could not long resist the pressure put upon

[1] It must be remembered that in the West the Fourth Council was held in peculiar honour, as being the one Ecumenical Council in which Western influence, as represented by the Pope, had been distinctly predominant. At Nicaea the Pope had been hardly named, at Constantinople he was not even represented, at Ephesus the vehemence and ability of Cyril threw all others into the shade. But at Chalcedon the legates of Leo were prominent in the discussions, and his Tome was received with enthusiastic acclamation as the exposition of the orthodox creed. "Such," cried all the bishops, "was the teaching of the Apostles; Peter hath spoken by Leo." The attack on the Fourth Council (implied in the condemnation of Theodoret and Ibas, who had been then received as orthodox) naturally was particularly objectionable to the bishops of the West, especially as, through their general ignorance of Greek, they were unable to appreciate the subtle points of doctrine which were brought into dispute.

[2] *Lib. Pont. Vita Vigilii.*

him, and so, after deliberating with some Western bishops who were in the capital, he published, in April, 548, a "Iudicatum," in which, while declaring his adhesion to the Fourth General Council, he nevertheless launched a solemn anathema against the person and writings of Theodore, and the writings of Theodoret and Ibas.[1] This was the first recantation of Vigilius.

The effect of this document was startling. The Western Church was thrown into convulsions. Datius of Milan, whom Vigilius had consulted on the case, openly expressed his indignation. Facundus, bishop of Hermiana in Africa, posted home from Constantinople with the news, which was everywhere received with horror. Two even of Vigilius's own clergy named Rusticus and Sebastian, who had at first welcomed the Pope's decision, now joined in the general outcry. Illyricum mutinied, and a synod at Carthage in 549 formally excommunicated the renegade Pontiff. Vigilius, and even Justinian, recognized that in the excited state of feeling throughout the West, it was imperative that some concessions should be made. A secret treaty was accordingly arranged between the Pope and the Emperor, by which the former was permitted to withdraw his declaration on condition of promising to do all in his power in future to procure the condemnation of the Three Chapters.

A Council was now summoned to deliberate further on the matter, but the Western bishops refused to attend. The unhappy Vigilius was more than ever embarrassed; for he could scarcely resist by himself the combined authority of Emperor and synod, whereas, if he joined with the Easterns in condemning the Three Chapters, he would inevitably lose the allegiance of the West. For the moment, however, he was rescued from his difficult position by the impatience of Justinian, who, wearied out with delays and objections, issued in 551, on his own plenary authority, a second edict, condemning in strong terms the Three Chapters and all their upholders.[2]

Such an edict was, of course, a flagrant infringement of the rights of the Church to determine matters of faith, and even the Eastern bishops appear to have been indignant. Vigilius, summoning all his courage, called a synod in the Palace of

[1] For some fragments of the Iudicatum, see Hefele *Conciliengeschichte* vol. i.

[2] Migne *P. L.* lxix. p. 226, *sqq.*

Placidia, at which the assembled bishops protested against the Emperor's action, condemned the edict and all who received it, and ordered its removal from all churches and public places where it might be posted. Immediately afterwards Vigilius deposed Theodore Ascidas, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, for venturing to celebrate mass in a church where the edict was exhibited, and temporarily excommunicated the Patriarch Mennas and certain other bishops, because they countenanced Theodore and imitated his contumacy.[1] These sentences, however, were not published for the present, but were held in reserve. After this, Vigilius, feeling that he had offended the Emperor beyond hope of pardon, fled for asylum to the Basilica of St. Peter. Nor had he miscalculated the extent of Justinian's resentment. In a short time the Praetor arrived at the church with orders to arrest him; but Vigilius, who was a corpulent man, refused to leave, and wound his arms tightly round a pillar of the altar. Then ensued a disgraceful scene. The soldiers entered the church with drawn swords, and those whose business it was to make the arrest endeavoured to drag away the suppliant by brute force. Some seized his hair and beard, others pulled at his legs. Vigilius, in an agony of fear, clung desperately to the pillar, which broke in the struggle, and the heavy altar would have fallen and crushed him had not some clergy run forward and held it up. Finally the Pope's pertinacity triumphed, and the Praetor retired to get further instructions.[2]

Justinian now sent to Vigilius a deputation of nobles, who were commissioned to assure him of his personal safety if he would quit the basilica, but who threatened to drag him away by violence in case he refused. The humiliated Pontiff thought it best to accept the terms offered. After exacting from the envoys a solemn oath both by word of mouth and in writing that no evil should befall him, he left his sanctuary and took up his residence in the Palace of Placidia. Very soon, however, he again had reason to tremble for his safety. The palace was

[1] *Fragmentum damnationis Theodori* (Migne, lxix. pp. 60–62).

[2] *Vigilii Encyclica* (Migne, lxix. p. 55); *Ep. Legatis Francorum* (Migne, lxix. p. 117); Theophanes *A. M.* 6039. The author of the *Vita Vigilii* seems to have heard vague rumours of this story (he knows, at least, of personal insults offered to Vigilius, and of the breaking of the altar-column), but his narrative is exceedingly confused, and he imagined that the whole dispute was about the restoration of the Patriarch Anthimus.

filled with men-at-arms, sentries were placed at all the doors, and the shouts of soldiers patrolling the passages terrified the Pope even in his bed-chamber. Again and again he reminded the ambassadors of their safe conduct, and bound them by fresh oaths of protection, but in spite of the fair assurances he received, his situation grew daily more alarming. The Pope was in deadly terror of assassination, and at last his fears became so intolerable that he determined to flee once more into asylum. On the 23rd of December, 551, he managed to squeeze his great body through a little hole in the palace wall, and, under cover of darkness, got safe away to the sacred and inviolable sanctuary of St. Euphemia in Chalcedon.[1]

Here Vigilius was in comparative safety. Even Justinian dared not offer violence in that celebrated shrine. About a month later, however, on the 28th of January, he sent again the former envoys, to persuade the Pope to accept a safe conduct and leave the building. But Vigilius repelled their overtures, saying, "I have fled to this basilica for no pecuniary or private reason, but only to end a scandal to the Church, which for our sins was known to the whole world. If, therefore, that peace which our Most Religious Emperor in his uncle's time granted to the Church be now restored, I need no oaths, but will come forth at once. If it be not, I still require no oaths, for I am determined never to leave this basilica unless the scandal be cut off from God's Church." He reminded the ambassadors of what had been done by the synod in the Palace of Placidia at the time of the publication of the edict of 551, and he hinted that if any violence was offered to himself, the sentences passed on Theodore and the rest would at once be made public. Finally he sent a message to the Emperor, warning him not to communicate with the persons under the ban. The ambassadors then departed.[2]

Three days afterwards Peter the Referendarius carried to Vigilius an unsigned letter, "so full of outrageous falsehoods and insults" that the Pope refused to believe the messenger's assurance that it came from Justinian himself. He replied to it, however, in an "Encyclica" addressed to the whole Church, in which he professed to give a simple and straightforward account of the controversy, and of the events which induced him to take refuge in the Church of St. Euphemia.

[1] *Vigilii Encyclica.* [2] *Ibid.*

The dispute now languished for some months. Vigilius remained secluded in his asylum. Some of the leaders died, among them Datius of Milan and the Patriarch Mennas. The edict remained posted, and the West continued in sullen opposition. At last Justinian, weary of the deadlock, came to terms with the Pope. He withdrew the edict, and consented to reserve the whole question of the Three Chapters for the decision of a General Council, which was immediately summoned.

On the 5th of May, in the year 553, the Fifth General Council met in the south gallery of the Church of St. Sophia. Unfortunately, the bishops of the West, awed by the fate of Vigilius, were afraid to put in an appearance; so that of the hundred and sixty-five prelates assembled there were only twenty-six who occupied Western sees. This numerical minority alarmed Vigilius, who clearly perceived that he would be outvoted in the Council. Hence, although he had promised to be present at the deliberations, he now excused himself, first pleading illness and afterwards alleging as his reason the immense majority of the Easterns. He promised, however, to set down his views in writing, and send them to the Emperor. After several attempts had been made to persuade the Pope to change his purpose, and much time had been wasted in futile negotiations, the Council proceeded to business without him. The result of its deliberations was, of course, a foregone conclusion. The edict of Justinian was adopted, the three disputed articles were approved, and the soul of Theodore, together with the writings of Theodoret and Ibas, were anathematized amid the acclamations of the assembled Fathers.[1] Meanwhile Vigilius issued a manifesto of his own. Conjointly with sixteen Western bishops, he published a "Constitutum," in which he made a formal protest against the Council, condemned the supporters of the disputed articles, and anathematized all who should in future agitate the question, or publish or teach anything contrary to the opinions expressed in the Constitutum. In short, the Papal decision was that the entire subject should be dropped, and the three suspected heretics left in peace. This was the second recantation of Vigilius, or, more strictly, the recantation of the recantation embodied in the Iudicatum.

This insult was more than Justinian could endure. Vigilius

[1] Labbe *Conc.* v. p. 411, *sqq.*

was seized and banished to Proconnessus, a dreary rock near the western end of the Sea of Marmora; and here the unfortunate Pope, abandoned by all his friends, fell a prey to the horrors of despair. He heard alarming rumours that they were preparing to elect a new bishop in Rome, and that his own name was to be struck out of the diptychs. His friends, one and all, seemed to have deserted him, and his physical health was shattered by the painful disease of the stone. After six months of extreme misery he felt that he could suffer thus no longer. On the 8th of December, 553, he sent a letter of submission to the Patriarch Eutychius. Hitherto, he wrote, he had been deluded by the devil's arts, but now "Christ our God, who is the True Light which the darkness comprehendeth not, has removed all confusion from our mind, and recalled the whole world and the Church to peace." He had gone more carefully than before into the question of the Three Chapters, and a close study of the Fathers had convinced him that his former opinions were mistaken. He was therefore ready to retract those opinions, following the example of Augustine, who was not ashamed to recant his errors. He now condemned Theodore and his writings, the writings of Theodoret and Ibas, together with all such persons as should hereafter venture to defend them, and he pronounced his own previous definitions in favour of the heretics to be null and void, and the decrees of the Fifth General Council to be true and binding.[1] This informal submission was followed by another document—the third and last recantation of Vigilius. In this last "Constitutum" the vacillating Pope retracted his previous pronouncements, confirmed the decrees of the Fifth General Council, and finally condemned the Three Chapters.[2] In reward for his complacence he was recalled to Constantinople, and after a while permitted to leave for Italy. He died, however, at Syracuse, on the 7th of June, 555.

Unfortunately, the submission of Vigilius did not end the dispute. The bishops of the West still hesitated to accept the decrees of the Fifth General Council. Even in Italy itself, in the provinces of Tuscany, Liguria, Venetia, and Istria, there was much disaffection. The Archbishop of Milan and the Patriarch of Aquileia openly withdrew from communion with the Roman See.

[1] *Ep. Decretalis Vigilii* (Migne, lxix. p. 121, *sqq.*).
[2] *Vigilii Constitutum* (Migne, p. 67, *sqq.*).

Pope Pelagius the First, as we have elsewhere noticed, made a strenuous effort to restore the broken unity. He wrote a joint letter to seven bishops of Tuscany, reproving them for their disloyalty to the See of St. Peter, and quoting Augustine's dictum that "Such as are out of communion with the bishops of the Apostolical Sees are in a state of schism." He emphatically asserted his personal adherence to the decrees of the Four General Councils and to the Tome of Leo; and, without direct allusion to the Fifth Council, he urged his correspondents to return into unity with the Roman Church, and invited them, if they still had scruples, to come to Rome and satisfy themselves as to his orthodoxy in a personal interview.[1] A similar letter was published, addressed "to the whole People of God,"[2] and a third and more explicit statement was sent to Childebert, king of the Franks.[3] Nor did Pelagius disdain to call in the help of the secular arm. He wrote in pressing terms to Narses,[4] maintaining the lawfulness of coercing schismatics, and praying him to employ force to bring the recalcitrant bishops to obedience. But there is no evidence that the Patrician made any attempt to act upon the Pope's exhortation.

In Northern Italy the Lombard invasion did more than the letters of Pelagius to abate the schism. The conquered part of the country passed, to a great extent, beyond the sphere of Papal influence, while in the unconquered part a common hatred of the Arian invaders drew the Catholic clergy together. Thus in Tuscany and Liguria, though there was still some smouldering discontent, yet the bitterness of the schism died away. In the peninsula of Istria, however, which, together with the coast-line of Venetia, was still reckoned an Imperial province, the feud continued. For a time, indeed, it slumbered. Paulinus, the Patriarch of Aquileia, on the coming of the Lombards, removed to the island of Grado, at the mouth of the Isonzo, where he died about 570. His successor, Probinus, occupied the see only for some months. Elias, who followed him, may possibly have begun by courting the friendship of the Bishop of Rome. At any rate, there is some documentary evidence (though its authenticity is open to suspicion) that in 579 Pelagius the Second gave his sanction to the transference

[1] Pelag. I. *Epp.* v. (Migne *P. L.* lxix. p. 398).
[2] *Ibid.* vi. [3] *Ibid.* ix., xv. [4] *Ibid.* ii.

of the metropolis of the province from Aquileia to Grado, now called "New Aquileia"; and this he would certainly not have done had the Patriarch maintained to the full towards him his former animosity.

A mere cessation of hostilities, however—even granting that it occurred—did not satisfy this Pope. He was determined, if possible, to reduce the Istrians to complete submission, and to wrest from them a formal condemnation of the Three Chapters. Accordingly—probably in 585—Pelagius addressed an earnest letter,[1] gentle and persuasive in tone, to Elias and the bishops of Istria, entreating them not to sever themselves any longer from the unity of the Holy Church. Not a word was said about the Fifth Council, the real cause of the dispute; but the Pope protested in strong and explicit language his complete adherence to the decrees of the Four General Councils and the Tome of Leo, and then argued that, as the schismatical bishops had no reason to doubt the sincerity or purity of his faith, they were bound to return to the bosom of the Church, knowing that those who were severed from the peace and unity of the Church were severed from Christ Himself. They were reminded that the faith of Peter can never be shaken or changed. If they still entertained any doubts as to the Pope's real views, they should send some of their number to Rome, and those who came would be received with kindness and permitted to return whenever they liked.

Elias and the Istrian bishops sent back neither submission nor defence. They replied merely with a formal definition of their position and a sharp attack on the Papal policy respecting the Three Chapters, going so far as to hint at an anathema against the Pope himself. Pelagius, notwithstanding this provocation, did not lose his temper. In a second letter,[2] written in the same mild strain as the former, he dwelt still more strongly on the evils of schism, replied to some of their objections, sent them the genuine records of the Councils copied from the archives of the Roman See, and entreated them not to incur any longer the danger of separation from the Universal Church on account of disputes of such trifling importance, but to send instructed persons as deputies to Rome, or, if they feared the length and danger of such a journey, to Ravenna,

[1] Greg. *Epp.* Appendix iii. (1).

[2] *Ibid.* Appendix iii. (2).

whither he offered to send representatives of his own to meet them.

This second letter had no better effect than the former. The Istrian bishops refused to meet Pelagius either at Rome or at Ravenna. They clung obstinately to their position that the condemnation of the Three Chapters was a condemnation of the Council of Chalcedon, and this deliberate opinion they laid before the Pope, with scarcely any attempt, so he complains, either to justify their own view or to meet his arguments. Meanwhile Gregory the Apocrisiarius had returned from Constantinople, and to him Pelagius now entrusted the further conduct of the dispute. The stern deacon, with his immense veneration for the Roman See and his detestation of schism, strengthened by his observation of ecclesiastical conditions in the East, was not disposed to treat leniently what he regarded as nothing less than sinful contumacy. The tone of the "very useful letter" which he composed and sent in the name of Pelagius to the Istrian bishops,[1] is very different from that of the two former epistles. As mildness had been found ineffectual, Gregory endeavoured to bring his opponents to a better disposition by severity. He sternly upbraided them for their self-opinionated obstinacy, and then proceeded to deal at considerable length with the old arguments.[2]

The main object of the treatise is to show that the condemnation of the Three Chapters in no way impugned the authority of Leo or of the Council of Chalcedon. First, in the case of Leo, this is proved by a series of extracts from the letters of that Pope, which show that he only confirmed by his authority the decrees of the Council on points of doctrine. Everything else, even if approved by his representatives at the Council, might (according to Leo himself) still be called in question at a future time, and indeed he had actually annulled several decrees referring to private or personal matters. By doing this, he restricted the authority of the Council to the definition of the Faith: to that alone the assent of the Apostolic See was pledged. But, Gregory went on to argue, the case of Theodoret and Ibas

[1] Paul. Diac. *Hist. Lang.* iii. 20. At a later time, when he had become Pope, Gregory sent a copy of this tract to the schismatic bishops of Iberia, requesting them to consider carefully its contents (Greg. *Epp.* ii. 49).

[2] Greg. *Epp.* Appendix iii. (3).

received into communion by the Council, clearly belonged to the category of private and personal concerns; and such matters, according to Leo himself, might at any time be reconsidered. With reference to this argument, we may observe that Leo's limitation of his assent to the decrees on doctrine was made in view of the canon in honour of the see of Constantinople. Gregory's attempt to apply this reservation to the case in hand is a piece of somewhat doubtful casuistry.

Secondly, Gregory tried to show that the condemnation of the Three Chapters was in strict accordance with the Definition of Faith promulgated by the Council of Chalcedon. If that Council had really approved all the writings of Theodoret and Ibas, and consequently of Theodore, with whom the two others were in agreement, it would have set itself in opposition to the Council of Ephesus. But the Fathers of Chalcedon and the schismatical bishops themselves accepted the Council of Ephesus, and therefore implicitly condemned all that was in opposition to it. Moreover, the Fifth Council did not condemn all Theodoret's writings, but only such as were tainted with Nestorianism and directed against Cyril; and these Theodoret himself had implicitly condemned when he anathematized Nestorius.

The argument that it is wrong to condemn the person of a dead man (Theodore) who had died in the communion of the Church, is met by quotations from Augustine and from the acts of the First Council of Ephesus. The unwillingness of Vigilius to condemn the Three Chapters, and the ill treatment he suffered before consenting to it, are skilfully urged as proofs of his earnestness and sincerity. Vigilius and the Western bishops, from their ignorance of Greek, were at first unacquainted with the errors contained in the suspected writings, and they would condemn nothing till they were really convinced that it ought to be condemned. Their very hesitation was, therefore, a reason for accepting more readily their ultimate decision. The Latin bishops never varied in their adherence to the right faith; the only point on which for a time they were doubtful was whether certain writings of Theodore, Theodoret, and Ibas were in opposition to that faith or not. There was, consequently, on their part a change of language, but never of principle—a change with regard to persons, but never with regard to doctrines. Hence

there was no reason at all for bringing a charge of inconsistency against that Holy See, which the whole Church humbly venerated in the person of St. Peter, its founder.

It would have been difficult to draw up a more skilful defence of Roman orthodoxy, or a clearer statement of the arguments for reunion. To impartial people, no doubt, it might have seemed clear that no one who sincerely adopted the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, could with any show of reason defend all the writings of Theodore, Theodoret, and Ibas. At the same time, such persons might easily have been convinced that the question in dispute was far too petty to fight about when the unity of the Church was at stake. But in the case of the Istrian bishops, a feeling of personal bitterness hindered a settlement. Gregory's arguments made no impression. The bishops continued staunch in their belief that Pope Vigilius and the Emperor Justinian had alike behaved badly, that the decrees of the Fifth Council were intended to impair the authority of the Fourth, and that the Latin bishops were only induced to give their assent to them by violence. Hence the schism continued.

The argument of violence which had formerly proved so successful in the case of Vigilius was now in turn resorted to by the champions of orthodoxy. About 588 the Exarch Smaragdus sailed to Grado, seized Severus (who had succeeded Elias as patriarch) and three other bishops, John of Parenzo, Severus of Trieste, and Vindemius of Cissa, and carried them off to Ravenna. After being detained there for a year, exposed the while to every kind of insult and ill treatment, they were at last induced to communicate with John, bishop of Ravenna, who acknowledged the authority of the Fifth Council and was in communion with the Pope. They were then permitted to return home; but when they arrived they found that neither the people nor the other bishops of the province would hold communion with them. After a short interval, however, a synod was held at Marano, and there the Patriarch publicly confessed that he had done wrong in communicating with the bishop of Ravenna. Perhaps he did this the more readily since his persecutor, Smaragdus, had become insane and been removed from his government. At any rate, after his confession, Severus was restored to communion, and became once more the leader

of a schism which seemed as far off as ever from any termination.[1] Gregory's subsequent dealings with the schismatics in the time of his pontificate will be described in a later chapter.

The year 589 was signalized by great disasters and calamities thoughout the length and breadth of the Empire. In the East the Persians defeated the Roman troops and captured Martyropolis, while the Slaves, who had been quiet for a while, made a devastating raid into Thrace. A great portion of the city of Antioch was laid in ruins by a terrific earthquake, and sixty thousand lives were lost. The venerable sanctuary of the Mother of God was destroyed, together with the bishop's palace, the bishop himself escaping death by a miracle.[2] In Italy there was an extraordinary inundation. Throughout Venetia, Liguria, and the north, the streams and mountain-torrents overflowed. Houses and farms were washed away by the tumultuous waters, and thousands of men and animals were drowned. The great post-roads were badly injured by the floods, while many of the lesser tracks were entirely obliterated. In Verona the river Adige rose, and threw down a portion of the city walls.[3] The Church of San Zenone was surrounded by the water, which swelled up as high as the topmost line of windows just below the roof; but it is said that, though the doors were open, and the flood blocked them on the outside like a solid wall, not a drop penetrated the basilica.[4] This miracle of the flood took place in October. Two months later a large part of Verona was destroyed by fire.

In Rome the Tiber overflowed its banks, and a portion of the city was inundated: several ancient buildings—situated presumably on the Campus Martius—were thrown down, and the granaries of the Church were destroyed, with all their store of corn. In the channel of the river, it is recorded, an innumerable multitude of serpents and a dragon of great size were borne past the city to the sea, where they were choked in the salt waves, and polluted all the shores with their putrefying bodies.[5]

One consequence of this inundation was that the pestilence

[1] Paul. Diac. *Hist. Lang.* iii. 26. [2] Evagr. *Hist.* vi.
[3] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 32; *Lib. Pont. Vita Pelagii II.*
[4] Greg. *Dial.* iii. 19; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 35.
[5] Greg. Tur. *H. F.* x. 1; Paul. Diac. *Vita* 10; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 34–36.

(*lues inguinaria*), which during the last fifty years had been devastating Europe at intervals, now broke out in Italy with exceptional fury. This dreadful scourge appears to have originated in Egypt, to have passed thence eastwards over Syria and Persia, and so to have entered Europe, spreading from the coast-line inland. It was remarkable alike for the rapidity of its working, the great mortality it produced, and the utter inability of the physicians to cope with it. Its main characteristics are known to us from the classical descriptions of Thucydides, Procopius, and Boccaccio,[1] from which it appears to have combined "the features of several modern diseases in one," having, for instance, "symptoms in common with typhus fever and with the more malignant forms of measles and small-pox." Gibbon's account of the malady, based on that of Procopius, is worth repeating. The majority of the sufferers, he says,[2] "in their beds, in the streets, in their usual occupations, were surprised by a slight fever; so slight, indeed, that neither the pulse nor the colour of the patient gave any signs of the approaching danger. The same, the next, or the succeeding day, it was declared by the swelling of the glands, particularly those of the groin, of the arm-pits, and under the ear; and when these buboes or tumours were opened, they were found to contain a coal, or black substance, of the size of a lentil. If they came to a just swelling and suppuration, the patient was saved by this kind and natural discharge of the morbid humour. But if they continued hard and dry, a mortification quickly ensued, and the fifth day was commonly the term of his life. The fever was often accompanied with lethargy or delirium; the bodies of the sick were covered with black pustules or carbuncles, the symptoms of immediate death; and in constitutions too feeble to produce an eruption, the vomiting of blood was followed by a mortification of the bowels. To pregnant women the plague was generally mortal; yet one infant was drawn alive from his dead mother, and three mothers survived the loss of their infected foetuses. Youth was the most perilous season, and the female sex was less susceptible than the male; but every rank and profession were attacked with indiscriminate rage, and many of those who

[1] See the references in Jowett's *Thucydides* ii. pp. 143–155; add also Agathias *Hist.* v. 10.

[2] Gibbon *Decline and Fall* c. 43.

escaped were deprived of the use of their speech, without being secure from a return of the disorder."

Among the most distressing features of the malady were the visions and hallucinations which distracted the frenzied imagination of the sufferers.[1] Men fancied that they saw ghastly spectres stalking through the streets and striking with their hands those who were destined to die. Ineffaceable marks appeared upon the houses or the clothes of the doomed persons, and the arrows of divine wrath were seen visibly darting down on them from heaven. The air resounded with the braying of unseen trumpets, and the voices of the dead were heard calling their friends to join them. Those who experienced these phantasms sickened and died, not always immediately but generally within three or four days. Certain who had been brought to the point of death, but had subsequently recovered, related strange visions which they had witnessed in their sickness. A soldier, for instance, who had lain for some time to all appearance lifeless, imagined that his soul left the body and came to a black, smoky river, which emitted an intolerable stench, and which was spanned by the bridge of the dead. On the further side of the stream were pleasant meadows fragrant with flowers, amid which were companies of men apparelled in white. Many separate mansions were also there, all shining with brightness and light, and there was one house being built especially magnificent, the bricks whereof appeared to be of gold; but whose it was he knew not. On the banks of the river also were certain houses, but some of them were touched by the noisome vapour which rose from the ditch. Now, the dead who desired to cross the bridge were subject to the following trial. If a wicked man attempted to go over, he fell down into the dark and foul-smelling waters; but those who were just and unhindered by sin passed over easily to the pleasant places beyond. As the dreamer watched he beheld Peter, the merciless steward of the Pope, thrust into the most filthy place, where he was bound down by a great weight of iron in punishment for his former cruelty; a certain presbyter whom he knew, however, crossed the bridge with great security, inasmuch as his

[1] It has been remarked that this is a mediaeval trait. "The plague of the age of Pericles was not accompanied by spectral apparitions, or at least the rational Thucydides does not condescend to record such puerilities."

life had been good and upright. After the presbyter, one Stephen, a smith, assayed to go over, but his foot slipped and he hung half on, half off the bridge. Then certain frightful men rose out of the river and tried to drag him downwards by the legs, but some others in white robes and with beautiful faces strove to carry him up by the arms. And while the good and evil spirits contended together over Stephen, the soul of the dreaming soldier returned to his body, so that he never knew the end of the matter.[1]

Again, in Gregory's own monastery there was a boy named Theodore, who had always been incorrigibly bad. "He could not bear that any one should speak a word to him for the welfare of his soul. He would neither do nor listen to anything that was good. With oaths, with angry words, with scornful laughter, he used to protest that he would never adopt the habit of the holy life." This youth, being stricken with the plague, and being seemingly at the last gasp, called out suddenly to the brethren who were praying round his bed, "Depart, depart! I am given over to a dragon to be devoured, and he cannot devour me because you are here. He has already swallowed my head; let him alone, that he may not torture me longer, but may do what he has to do. If I am given up to be devoured by him, why should you cause me the suffering of this delay?" The frightened monks said, "What meanest thou, brother? Sign thyself with the sign of the cross." But he with terrible cries replied, "I wish to sign myself, but cannot. I am fettered by the coils of the dragon." The monks thereupon threw themselves on the ground, and redoubled their prayers; and in a little while the sick boy suddenly cried out, "Thank God, the dragon to whom I was given up has fled, for he could not abide your prayers. Pray now for my sins, because I am ready to be converted and to quit the secular life entirely." In the end the youth recovered, and thenceforward, says Gregory, "with his whole heart he turned to God."[2]

The mortality in Rome was appalling, and the state of the city, which doubtless resembled that of Constantinople during the visitation of 542, must have been terrible. Men lay dying and dead in their deserted houses, without a friend to soothe their

[1] Greg. *Dial.* iv. 36.

[2] *Ibid.* iv. 38; *Hom. in Ev.* 19, 38; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 38.

last moments or to attend to their burial. To inter each body separately was impossible. Waggon-loads of corpses were conveyed from the city night by night, and flung promiscuously into deep pits outside the walls. All business was of course at a standstill, traffic ceased, and in the streets and piazzas the few passengers slunk along furtively, avoiding one another. The churches alone were crammed with dense throngs of panic-stricken citizens, and thus became centres from which infection spread. Some persons went insane with terror, and performed strange antics in their madness; a few in despair flung themselves into wild orges of vice; many shut themselves up in their houses and refused to hold communication with any, until the plague pushed in behind the barricaded doors, and they fled out headlong, they knew not whither. A heavy stillness brooded over the city, broken only by the groans and shrieks of the dying, the subdued chant of Misereres, and the rumble of the death-waggons. All the skill of the physicians could do nothing to abate the malady.

To add to the general consternation, Pope Pelagius sickened of the plague and died on the 8th of February, in the year 590.[1] The choice of his successor lay with the clergy and people of Rome, the confirmation of their choice with the Emperor.[2] Without any hesitation, the Romans elected the popular Abbat of St. Andrew's.

In peaceful times the supreme dignity in the Western Church, with its magnificence and wealth and influence, had often been the object of long intrigues and fierce struggles even to bloodshed, but in the hour of suffering and danger there were few men who were willing to undertake the office, and fewer still who were capable of administering it. At a crisis like the present it was generally felt that a man of no ordinary abilities was needed. The Pope who was to pilot the Roman Church through the gathering difficulties and perils must be a man of

[1] Greg. Tur. *H. F.* x .1; *Lib. Pont. Vita Pelagii II.*; Paul. Diac. *Vita* 10; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 37.

[2] Since the time of Justinian, the Emperors claimed the right of ratifying the elections to all the most important sees in their dominions, and the claim was conceded by the Church. In Italy a similar claim had already been made by the Gothic sovereigns, and in 502 a Roman Council had protested against it. Constantine IV., in 685, transferred his right of ratifying the Papal elections to the Exarchs.

high character and attainments, a spiritual guide in whom the people could trust, a resolute defender of the rights and pretensions of the Roman See against the encroachments of the Imperial Government and the rivalry of the Patriarchs of Constantinople. He must be a skilful administrator, to manage the vast revenues of the Papacy, on which a large part of the Roman people depended for subsistence. He must be a courageous patriot, to watch with unsleeping vigilance over the safety of the city, to infuse some spirit of resistance into the scanty band of soldiers half mutinous for want of pay, and into the frightened populace who cowered behind the walls. He must be a statesman, finally, who could understand the policy and command the respect both of the Exarch and of the Lombard princes, and one whose personal influence and authority might even induce the Emperor to pay attention to the necessities of the ancient capital of his Empire. Of all the Roman ecclesiastics only one at this time seemed to possess these qualifications. By his high character and noble birth, by the reputation he had acquired among all classes as administrator, as monk, as ambassador, as confidential adviser to the late Pope, Gregory, in the opinion of all but himself, was marked out for the post of supreme honour and peril. Clergy and people—a poverty-stricken, plague-stricken throng—flocked to the monastery on the Caelian, and with loud cries commanded him to ascend the chair of Peter.

In spite of the unanimity and enthusiasm of the Romans, Gregory shrank from the proposed honour. He knew that, when once engaged in the anxious work of the pontificate, he would lose for ever the blessings of the secluded life which he so highly prized. He feared, moreover, that he would prove unequal to the task that was laid upon him, and that he would even suffer in personal character from the distracting influence of worldly cares and anxieties. He therefore resisted the importunities of his fellow-citizens, and actually wrote to the Emperor Maurice, earnestly entreating him not to confirm the election. This letter, however, was intercepted by Germanus, Prefect of the City, who substituted in its stead the formal document of the election.[1] Meanwhile, until a reply should be

[1] Greg. Tur. *H. F.* x. 1; Paul. Diac. *Vita* 10; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 39, 40. Possibly Gregory also wrote to John the Patriarch, asking him to persuade the

brought from Constantinople, Gregory—probably in conjunction with the Archpresbyter, the Archdeacon, and the Chief of the Notaries[1]—was entrusted with the administration of the vacant see.

The plague continued to rage. Gregory worked indefatigably to check its progress, but without result. At length he determined to appeal to the people to make a special act of contrition, that the wrath of God, signified by this awful pestilence, might be turned away. He ascended the ambo in the Basilica of St. John Lateran, and there, amid a breathless silence of the people, he preached a sermon, which has fortunately been preserved."[2] "We ought, my beloved brethren, to have feared the chastisements of God before they came, but let us at all events fear them now that they have come and we have felt them. Let sorrow open the way for us to conversion. Let the punishments we already suffer break up the hardness of our hearts, for as the prophet bears us witness: *The sword reacheth unto the soul.* Behold, all the people are smitten with the sword of God's wrath, and men are laid low in sudden destruction. There is no interval of weakness before death; death leaves no time for the slow process of decay. Before the sufferer can turn to penitential mourning, he is gone. Think in what plight that man appears before the strict Judge who has had no time to bewail his evil deeds. The inhabitants are taken away; they fall, not one by one, but all together. Houses are left empty, parents see their children buried, their heirs go before them to the grave. Let us then, each one of us, flee for refuge

Emperor to withold his assent (Greg. *Epp.* i. 4). The idea that Gregory's brother was Prefect comes from a misinterpretation of the words of Greg. Tur.: "Sed praefectus urbis Romae Germanus eius anticipavit nuntium," where some read "germanus eius."

[1] According to the usual arrangement, the Archpresbyter, the Archdeacon, and the Primicerius Notariorum acted as vicegerents of the Roman See during a vacancy. If Gregory was not himself Archdeacon (which is possible, though unlikely), he took his share of the responsibility as Bishop-elect. For a parallel instance, see Baeda *H. E.* ii. 19. (The word "primicerius" is possibly derived from "primus in cera," *i.e.* the notary whose name stood first on the "cerata tabula" or "catalogus" of the notaries.)

[2] Greg. Tur. *H. F.* x. 1; Paul. Diac. *Vita* 11; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 41. It seems clear, from Greg. *Epp.* xiii. 2 (Hartmann's note), that a similar procession was held and this sermon was repeated on one or more subsequent occasions, possibly annually.

to penitential mourning, while we have time to weep, before the blow falls. Let us summon up before the eyes of the mind the sins we have committed, let us bewail whatever we have done amiss, *let us come before His face with confession*, and as the prophet admonisheth us, *let us lift up our hearts with our hands to God.* To lift up our hearts with our hands to God is to heighten the earnestness of our prayers by the merit of good works. He gives, He surely gives us confidence in our fear, who cries to us by His prophet: *I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.* Let no one despair for the greatness of his iniquities. The inveterate sins of the Ninevites were purged away by three days of penitence, and the converted robber earned the reward of life in the very moment of his death. Therefore let us change our hearts, and let us feel sure that we have already received what we ask for. The Judge is more quickly swayed by prayer, if the suppliant corrects his evil life. While, then, the stroke of such grievous punishment is still impending, let us persist in importunate prayers. That importunity which displeases men is pleasing in the judgment of the Truth; for the good and merciful God desires that pardon should be claimed from Him by prayer, because He desires not to be angry with us according to our deserts; for so He saith by the Psalmist: *Call upon Me in the time of trouble; so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise Me.* He who thus urges men to call upon Him is a witness unto Himself that He will have mercy upon those who call upon Him. Therefore, my beloved brethren, with contrite hearts and amended lives, with devout minds and with tears, let us assemble at early dawn on the fourth day of the week in a sevenfold litany, in the order to be hereafter given, so that when the strict Judge sees that we punish our faults ourselves, He may refrain from passing the sentence of condemnation, now ready to be pronounced against us."

The order of the procession is then indicated. "Let the clergy set out from the Church of SS. Cosmas and Damian the Martyrs, with the priests of the Sixth Region. Let all the abbats with their monks set out from the Church of SS. Gervasius and Protasius the Martyrs, with the priests of the Fourth Region. Let all the abbesses with their congregations set out

from the Church of SS. Marcellinus and Peter the Martyrs, with the priests of the First Region; the children from the Church of SS. John and Paul the Martyrs, with the priests of the Second Region; the laymen from the Church of St. Stephen the Protomartyr, with the priests of the Seventh Region; the widows from the Church of St. Euphemia, with the priests of the Fifth Region; the married women from the Church of St. Clement the Martyr, with the priests of the Third Region. Let us go forth from each of these churches with prayers and tears; let us meet together at the Basilica of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Mother of our Lord God Jesus Christ; and let us there persevere in supplications to the Lord, with weeping and groaning, that we may be deemed worthy to receive pardon for our sins." [1]

So in the dim twilight of the spring morning—it was the 25th of April, according to a tradition which dates back to the seventh century—the great procession started. Pale-faced, emaciated, and clad in deepest mourning, the people moved slowly through the desolate streets towards the great basilica on the Esquiline. As the seven trains of priests and mourners wound through the city scarcely a sound was heard save the tramp of feet, and sobs and cries for mercy, and over all the doleful chant of the Kyrie Eleison, deepening in fervour as one person after another dropped plague-stricken from the ranks. For Death kept step with the moving crowds, and, according to the report of a deacon of Tours, who was an eye-witness, in the space of a single hour no less than eighty men fell down and died.[2] Thus at length the Church of the Mother of God was reached, and here again Gregory addressed to the people an earnest exhortation to prayer and penitence, promising that if they would have faith the pestilence should cease.

With this famous procession is connected a beautiful legend, which, though traced back to a date earlier than the tenth century, is not found in writing till the thirteenth. According to the tradition, Gregory is represented at the head of a great train of penitents, crossing the Bridge of Hadrian on his way

[1] For the order, see Greg. Tur. *H. F.* x. 1, and compare Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 24. A different arrangement is given by Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 42, and in the sermon as printed in Greg. *Epp.* xiii. 2. The latter, however, refers, not to the procession of 590, but to one held subsequently.

[2] Greg. Tur. *H. F.* x. 1.

to St. Peter's. Before his eyes, about a bowshot beyond the Aurelian Gate, rose dazzling in the sunshine the Mausoleum of Hadrian[1]—a high square structure of Parian marble, surmounted by two circular buildings with colonnades, and crowned with a conical cupola and the famous bronze fircone, now in the garden of the Vatican. Though the Tomb of Hadrian had been sadly battered during the Gothic wars, and had lost those masterworks of Pheidias and Praxiteles which had once adorned its colonnades, it was still, as in Procopius's time, "a memorable sight" and a splendid monument of the nation's history. As Gregory and his penitents paused before it, they beheld on the summit the Archangel Michael, in the act of restoring to its sheath a flaming sword, in token that the plague was about to cease. From this legend the mausoleum, since the tenth century, has been called by the name of the Castle of the Angel, and for many hundreds of years a figure of an angel has crowned its summit.[2] Four of these statues have at different times been destroyed, the fifth and present one, cast in bronze by Wenschefeld, was set in position during the pontificate of Benedict the Fourteenth. It should be added that one curious relic connected with this legend is still to be seen in the Capitoline Museum. This is an altar dedicated to Isis by some one who had returned safely from a journey, which accordingly bears the conventional emblem of two footprints. The altar at one time stood in the Church of the Aracoeli, and the footprints—described by Philip de Winghe as those of a "puer quinquennis"—were long believed by Roman Christians to be those of the angel seen by Gregory on the summit of Hadrian's Tomb.

Another story of the procession, but less ancient, is found in the notice of Gregory in the *Legenda Aurea*. Caxton thus quaintly translates the words of the original: "And because the mortality ceased not, he (*i.e.* Gregory) ordained a procession, in which he did do bear an image of our Lady, which, as is said, St. Luke the Evangelist made, which was a good painter, he had carved it and painted after the likeness of the glorious

[1] Described by Procopius *Bell. Goth.* i. 22.

[2] Gregorovius suggests that "the legend, which is of earlier date than the tenth century, may possibly have owed its origin to some statue, perhaps of a winged genius, which had remained on the summit of the mausoleum."

Virgin Mary.[1] And anon the mortality ceased, and the air became pure and clear, and above the image was heard a voice that sung this anthem: 'Regina coeli laetare,' etc., and St. Gregory put thereto, 'Ora pro nobis, deum rogamus, alleluia.'" In memory of this alleged event the great processions from S. Marco were always accustomed to strike up the antiphon "Regina coeli" when they came to the Bridge of Hadrian.

At length, towards the end of August, after the Roman See had been vacant for more than six months, the ratification of Gregory's election came from Constantinople. The long delay must probably be attributed to the difficulties of communication in the disturbed state of Italy. At any rate, it was not due to any unwillingness on the Emperor's part to sanction the elevation of the celebrated deacon,[2] whose election seems to have given the greatest satisfaction at the Byzantine court. Gregory himself, however, was panic-stricken at the news. He sought to hide himself, and, according to a legend which grew up soon after his death, he actually succeeded in escaping from the city, though the gates were guarded, being conveyed out secretly in a basket of merchandise. For three days he remained concealed in a forest cave, but on the third night, in answer to the prayer and fasting of the people, his retreat was revealed by a column of light from heaven.[3] This story,

[1] Baronius, ann. 590: "Habent veteres rituales libri . . . ab eodem Gregorio sanctam imaginem Deiparae magna veneratione delatam; fuisse autem illa traditur, quae hactenus extat in Basilica S. Mariae ad praesepe, et a populo honorifico cultu frequentatur; eam tunc a S. Gregorio in processione delatam." Theodorus Lector reports that the Empress Eudocia sent to Pulcheria "a likeness of the Mother of God which the Apostle Luke painted" (*Excerpta* i. *ad init.*). For the carrying about of pictures at this time, compare Theophylact *Hist.* ii. 3: *Ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ πολέμιον παρεφαίνετο καὶ ἦν κόνις πολλή, Φιλιππικὸς τὸ θεανδρικὸν ἐπεφέρετο εἴκασμα, ὅ λόγος ἔκαθεν καὶ εἰς τὰ νῦν διηχεῖ θείαν ἐπιστήμην μορφῶσαι, οὐχ ὑφάντου χεῖρας τεκτήνασθαι ἢ ζωγράφου μηλιάδα ποικῖλαι. διά τοι τοῦτο καὶ ἀχειροποίητος παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις καθυμνεῖται, καὶ τῶν ἱεροθέων πρεσβειῶν ἠξίωται. ἀρχέτυπον γὰρ ἐκεῖνο θρησκεύουσι Ῥωμαῖοί τι ἄρρητον. ταὐτὸ ὁ στρατηγὸς τῶν σεβασμίων περιπέπλων γυμνώσας, τὰς τάξεις ὑπέτρεχε, κρεῖττονος καὶ ἀνανταγωνίστου θράσους ἐντεῦθεν μεταδιδοὺς τῷ στρατεύματι.* (Cf. *Ibid.* iii. 1.)

[2] Instances of deacons advanced at once to the episcopate are numerous in the first six centuries. A list will be found in Bingham, II. x. § 5, to which we may add Greg. *Epp.* iii. 29, 39, 46; x. 13. The practice at this time was not regarded as irregular. Thus, Leo the Great, speaking of the election of a metropolitan, says: "Ex presbyteris eiusdam ecclesiae, vel ex diaconibus optimus eligatur."

[3] Paul. Diac. *Vita* 13; Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 44. Both Paul and John got the story from the *S. Gallen Life*, 7.

however, can scarcely be historical. It is certainly true, as we know from Gregory himself,[1] that he wished to avoid the dignity thus thrust upon him, and even meditated going into hiding. But his project of flight was never carried out. "While he was preparing for flight and concealment," so writes his contemporary, Gregory of Tours,[2] "he was seized and carried off and dragged to the Basilica of St. Peter, and there, having been consecrated to the Pontifical office, was given as a Pope to the city." The event took place on the 3rd day of September, in the year of our Lord 590.

I may close this chapter with the confession of faith which Gregory made in public at the Fisherman's tomb on the day of his consecration.[3]

"I believe in One God, Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three Persons, one Substance: the Father unbegotten, the Son begotten, but the Holy Spirit, neither begotten nor unbegotten, but coeternal with and proceeding from the Father and the Son. I acknowledge the onlybegotten Son, consubstantial with the Father, and born of the Father without time; Maker of all things visible and invisible, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, the Brightness of His glory, the Image of His Substance: Who remaining the Word before all ages was made perfect Man at the end of the ages, and was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, and took upon Him our nature without sin: and He was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried, and on the third day He rose again from the dead, and on the fortieth day He ascended into heaven, and He sitteth at the right hand of the Father. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead, and He shall set before all eyes all the secrets of every heart, and He shall give to the righteous the eternal rewards of the heavenly kingdom, but to the wicked the punishment of everlasting fire, and He shall renew the world by fire at the resurrection of the flesh. I acknowledge one Faith, one Baptism, one Apostolic and Universal Church in which alone sins can be forgiven in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

[1] Greg. *Epp.* vii. 5; *Reg. Past.* Praef.
[2] Greg. Tur. *H. F.* x. 1.
[3] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 2.

BOOK II

GREGORY'S PONTIFICATE

CHAPTER I

GREGORY'S VIEW OF THE EPISCOPATE

THERE can be no doubt that Gregory was sincerely anxious to avoid the lofty dignity which was thrust upon him. If ever in his early days some sentiment of ambition had stirred within him, inclining him to quit the glories of secular life in the hope of attaining a yet higher elevation through the offices of the Church, that feeling had long been extinguished. In the monastic life he found complete satisfaction for all the aspirations of his soul. Here he was in harmony with his surroundings and at peace. In the quiet of his cell he could surrender himself freely to those fair, mystical dreams in which his fancy revelled, and live serenely in a world of his own creation, undisturbed by the swords of the Lombards or the caprices of the Emperor. He was supremely content to be mated with the barren but lovely Rachel, the symbol of the contemplative life. Nor had the political experience of his later years tended in any degree to diminish his affection. His intimacy with Pelagius had made him acquainted with the multitudinous anxieties and engrossing duties of the Papal office, and had convinced him that the supreme dignity of the Catholic Church was nothing but a grievous burden, embittering the life and imperilling the soul of him who was unfortunate enough to win it. And he felt that to walk obscurely in the peace of God was better than an outward exaltation for which one had to pay so great a price.

It was, therefore, with unfeigned regret that he found himself made Pope.[1] Congratulations poured in on him from every

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 45, writes: "Quia sunt nonnulli Langobardorum perfidi, qui Gregorium appetisse magis pontificium autument quam fugisse, operae pretium reor pauca de multis inserere, quibus eum, in quantum sine

side, but his answers were only a perpetual wail of lamentation. He declared on his conscience that he "undertook the burden of the dignity with a sick heart"[1]; he was "so stricken with sorrow that he could scarcely speak"; "the eyes of his soul were darkened with grief."[2] He protested that his elevation to what he paradoxically calls "the lowly height of external advancement,"[3] was not a true promotion. He would have been really promoted if he had been granted his "longed-for rest": but, as things were, he was "shackled with the chains of dignity,"[4] "distracted with the tumults of mundane matters,"[5] "oppressed to suffocation with business"[6]—nay, even "driven from the face of the Lord into the exile of employment,"[7] and by his episcopal order "separated almost from the love of God."[8]

The ferment of his mind expressed itself in a very interesting letter which he wrote, shortly after his consecration, to Theoctista, the Emperor's sister.[9] "Under the pretence of being made a bishop, I am brought back to the world; for I am now more in bondage to earthly cares than ever I was as a layman. I have lost the deep joy of my quiet, and while I seem outwardly to have risen, I am inwardly falling down. Wherefore I grieve that I am driven far from the face of my Maker. It used to be my daily aim to put myself beyond the world, beyond the flesh; to expel all corporeal forms from the eyes of the soul, and to behold in the spirit the blessedness of heaven. Panting for the sight of God, I used to cry not only in words but from the depths of my heart, *I have sought Thy face*; *Thy face, Lord, will I seek.* Desiring nothing and fearing nothing in this world, I seemed to myself to stand as it were on the summit of things, so that I almost thought that in me had been fulfilled the Lord's promise by His prophet, *I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.* For he is lifted up upon the high places of the earth who in his mind despises and tramples down even the things which in the present world seem high and glorious. But from this height I have been suddenly cast down

pertinaciae vitio potuit, noluisse pontificium, imo quasi pondus importabile penitus cavere voluisse, luce clarius manifestem." He then quotes most of the letters here referred to.

[1] *Epp.* i. 20. [2] *Ibid.* i. 6.
[3] "Deiectum exterioris provectus culmen."
[4] *Ibid.* i. 3. [5] *Ibid.* i. 7. [6] *Ibid.* i. 30.
[7] *Ibid.* i. 6. [8] *Ibid.* i. 29. [9] *Ibid.* i. 5.

by the whirlwind of this trial. I have fallen into fear and trembling, for, though I dread nothing for myself, I am greatly afraid for those who are committed to my charge. I am tossed to and fro with the waves of business, I am overwhelmed with its storms, so that I can truly say, *I am come into deep waters, so that the floods run over me.* When my business is done I try to return to my inner self, but cannot, for I am driven away by vain tumultuous thoughts. I loved the beauty of the contemplative life, as it were Rachel, barren but far-seeing and beautiful, who, though in her quietness she bears fewer children, yet beholds the light more clearly. But by some judgment, I know not what, I have been wedded in the night to Leah, to wit the active life, fruitful but blear-eyed; seeing less, but bringing forth more children. I longed to sit with Mary at the Lord's feet, and to hear the words of His mouth; but lo! I am compelled to serve with Martha in outward service and to be troubled about many things. When, as I thought, the legion of devils had been cast out of me, I wished to forget those whom I had known and to rest at the feet of the Saviour; and yet, against my will I hear and am compelled to obey the words, *Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee.* But who amidst so many earthly cares can declare the wonderful works of God? As for me, I find it difficult even to think of them. There are, indeed, many men who can so control their outward prosperity that they are inwardly not at all degraded by it. As it is said by Solomon: *A man of understanding shall possess governments.* But for me such things are difficult, and the task is heavy upon me; for what the mind does not undertake voluntarily it does not manage well. Behold! my Most Serene Lord the Emperor has ordered an ape to become a lion. And a lion, indeed, it may be called at his command, but a lion it cannot become.[1] Wherefore he must lay the blame of all my faults and negligences, not on me, but on the kind feeling which led him to commit the ministry of power to so weak an agent."

[1] Possibly in the congratulatory letters from Constantinople Gregory had been called a "second Leo," in allusion to St. Leo the Great. He replies by reminding his correspondents of the popular proverb, "An ape in a lion's skin." Cf. *Epp.* i. 6: "Quod vero causae et nominis similitudinem faciendo per scripta vestra clausulas declamationesque formatis, certe, frater carissime, simiam leonem vocas, quod eo modo vos agere conspicimus, quo scabiosos saepe catulos, pardos vel tigres vocamus."

In another letter to John patriarch of Constantinople, after chiding him for thrusting on his brother the episcopal office which he had himself endeavoured to avoid, Gregory continues: "Since I, weak and unworthy, have received the charge of a ship which is old and sadly shattered—for the waves are pouring in on every side, and the rotten planks, daily smitten with the violence of the storm, creak shipwreck—I pray you by Almighty God to stretch out the hand of your prayer to help me in my peril, for you can pray the more earnestly as you stand the further from the tumultuous woes we suffer here."[1]

But though Gregory dreaded the task that was set before him, he was too conscientious to refuse to undertake it. He was profoundly convinced that he had been called to the work by God. "I have undertaken the burden of this honour with regret," so he wrote to the Bishop of Salona,[2] "but I could not resist the divine judgments." And again to the Bishop of Corinth he wrote[3]: "Feeling myself too weak to reach the height of the Apostolic See, I wished to avoid this burden, lest I should fail in the pastoral rule through my imperfect discharge of its duties. But as it is impossible to resist the ordinances of God, I have obediently followed what the merciful hand of the Lord has been pleased to work out for me." And it was this intense conviction of a divine vocation that gave him hope. If the task was imposed on him by God's Will, the performance of it would not be left to his own unaided powers; but as the work was superhuman, so the ability to do it would be supernatural. Hence it was with mingled feelings of fear and hope, often, indeed, desponding and mournful, but sometimes calmly confident of ultimate success, that Gregory entered on the labours and anxieties of his pontificate.

It may be here inquired—What was Gregory's idea of the duties and responsibilities of the episcopal office? What was the standard and ideal, which as a bishop he endeavoured to maintain and realize?

The answer to this question is supplied to us in the *Liber Regulae Pastoralis*, or, as it is more commonly called, the *Liber Pastoralis Curae*—an admirable treatise on the Office of a Bishop, issued by Gregory at the beginning of his pontificate. The special occasion of this "golden little book"

[1] *Epp.* iv, 4. [2] *Ibid.* i. 20. [3] *Ibid.* i. 26; cf. i. 31.

was a letter from John of Ravenna, reproving Gregory for his unwillingness to undertake the burden of the Pastoral Care.[1] By way of reply, the Pope composed this treatise, in which he dwelt on the onerous nature of the episcopal office and the awful responsibility of those who are promoted to it. The book, however, was more than a mere apologia. Long before, while he was still engaged on his *Commentary on Job*, Gregory had in his mind the plan of such a treatise, which he intended to work out in detail when he had leisure.[2] Parts of it were, perhaps, composed while he was yet at St. Andrew's, though the final form of it was not perfected until after his consecration[3]; when the letter of the Archbishop of Ravenna furnished an appropriate excuse for its publication. Gregory hoped that the book would not only serve as an apology for his own attitude, but would also be instrumental in deterring unskilled and precipitate persons from striving to gain "the citadel of teaching," and coveting a perilous dignity in heedless ignorance of its dangers and responsibilities.[4]

In composing his handbook on the episcopal office, Gregory was indebted for several hints and suggestions to the similar treatise of Gregory Nazianzen,[5] which was likewise written as an explanation of the author's unwillingness to be made a bishop. With the celebrated *De Sacerdotio* of Chrysostom he appears to have been unacquainted.

The plan of the *Pastoral Care* is as follows :—It consists of four parts, of which the third is the longest and the fourth the shortest. The first part explains what manner of man should "come to supreme rule," and in what spirit he should undertake

[1] *Epp.* i. 24*a*. It is not certain that the John here referred to was the Archbishop of Ravenna. The title of Gregory's dedicatory letter runs: "Reverentissimo et sanctissimo fratri Joanni coepiscopo Gregorius." Isidor. *De Viris Illustr.* c. 39, 40, and Ildefonsus *De Vir. Illustr.* c. 1, assert that John of Constantinople is meant. But the *S. Gallen Life* c. 31; Paul. Diac. *Vita* 14; and Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 73, refer to John of Ravenna. The English tradition is probably correct. We know that John of Ravenna was Roman-born (*Epp.* iii. 66) and a friend of Gregory's (iii. 54; v. 15).

[2] *Mor.* xxx. 13.

[3] *Epp.* v. 53: "Librum regulae pastoralis, quem in episcopatus mei exordio scripsi." Gregory's synodical letter (*ibid.* i. 24) contains long extracts from the *Pastoral Care*. Hence it is probable that the latter was completed about the same time the synodical letter was written, *i.e.* early in 591.

[4] *Ibid.* i. 24*a*.

[5] *Reg. Past.* iii. Prolog.

it. The second part teaches how a man should order his life when constituted in the office of bishop. The third part discusses how a bishop should teach. The fourth and last part sets forth briefly how a bishop, while teaching well, should yet call to mind his own infirmities. These four parts must be considered a little in detail.

(1) The first part, as I said, is an investigation of the character of a proper candidate for the episcopate. Gregory commences with a couple of syllogisms, which, though expressed confusedly, came to something like this: Every art must be learned: the government of souls is the art of arts: therefore the art of governing souls must be learned. Again, dangerous diseases must be treated by qualified physicians: the diseases of the soul are the worst of all diseases: these, then, require qualified physicians for their treatment. In other words, the episcopal office, which is the Master-Art and Supreme Science of Healing, must be undertaken only by skilled men—by men who, through nature and training, are specially fitted for that office. This canon at once excludes those persons who covet the "magisterium humilitatis" for the sake of the distinction it confers, and also those who, though learned and studious, are evil livers. Such men cannot be skilled in episcopal government, for an arrogant bishop cannot teach his flock humility, neither can a perverse liver instruct in righteousness. On the contrary, their influence is thoroughly bad, and their leadership is "a leadership of perdition."[1]

Ecclesiastical rule, then, belongs of right to the skilled man. But even by such men the office is not to be coveted, being one of the greatest danger. For, as we observe in the cases of Saul and David, temporal prosperity is apt to engender pride, and pride is the mother of sin. Moreover, the multifarious cares of government necessarily distract the mind, and deprive it of "the solidity of inward fear." Therefore, says Gregory, "those who stumble on plain ground should shrink from approaching a precipice." It is best to be content with a safe obscurity, and to leave Church government to abler men, if such can be found.[2]

On the other hand, although government is not to be coveted, the really skilled man is not justified in refusing it

[1] *Reg. Past.* i. 1, 2. [2] *Ibid.* i. 3 4.

when it is thrust upon him. He who is endowed with great gifts must not allow a selfish love of quiet to hinder his exercising them in the public interest. For great gifts, if selfishly used, will be taken away; and the Son of God Himself came forth from the bosom of the Father that He might profit many.[1] Nor must such a one be deterred by any consideration of false modesty. For it is not true humility which obstinately refuses what it is enjoined to undertake. Real humility is rather shown when a man, "submitting himself to the divine disposals and averse from the vice of obstinacy," does what he is bidden, fleeing the duty in his heart, but against his will obeying.[2]

From these considerations Gregory lays down the general rule that "it is safer to decline the office of preaching, but we ought not to decline it pertinaciously when we see that God wills us to undertake it."[3] "He who abounds in virtues should accede to government under compulsion: he who is void of virtues should not under any compulsion approach it."[4]

Finally, Gregory sketches out the character of the ideal candidate for the episcopate.[5] "He ought by all means to be brought forward for a pattern of life, who, dying to the affections of the flesh, already liveth after a spiritual sort, who hath left worldly prosperity behind, who feareth no adversity, and desireth only inward wealth. And, agreeing well with his intentions, neither does his body in any wise strive against them through infirmity, nor his spirit greatly by disdain. He who is not drawn to desire other men's goods, but is liberal with his own; who through his bowels of compassion is quickly bent to forgiveness, but is never, by forgiving more than is meet, turned away from the post of uprightness; who is guilty of no unlawful deeds, but mourneth for those that are committed by others, as though they were his own; who feeleth for the infirmity of others with hearty sympathy, and rejoiceth in the good deeds of his neighbour as in his own advancement; who so giveth himself for a pattern in all things to others, that he hath nothing, at least in act, to put

[1] *Reg. Past.* i. 5.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 6.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 7.
[4] *Ibid.* i. 9.
[5] *Ibid.* i. 10. Throughout this chapter I have made use of the translation of the Rev. H. R. Bramley, sometime Canon of Lincoln (Parker and Co. 1874).

him to shame among them; who striveth so to live as to be able to water also the parched hearts of his neighbours with streams of doctrine; who hath already learnt by the using and making proof of prayer, that he can obtain from the Lord what things he asketh, to whom it is already said, as it were specially by the voice of experience, *Whiles thou art yet speaking, I will say, Lo! here I am!* For if any one should chance to come to take us to intercede for him with some powerful man who is angry with him and a stranger to us, we should answer at once, 'We cannot go to intercede, because we have no intimate acquaintance with him.' If, therefore, a man is ashamed to be an intercessor with a man with whom he hath no assurance, with what heart doth he catch at the place of interceding for the people with God, who knoweth not by the worthiness of his life that he is acquainted with His grace? Or, how doth he ask pardon from Him for others, who is ignorant whether or no He is appeased towards himself?"

(2) The second part of the *Pastoral* treats of the life of a bishop. Here Gregory singles out and enlarges upon certain qualities which mark the true pastor's character and conduct. The enumeration is as follows:—

A ruler must be pure in thought; "for the hand that would cleanse from dirt must needs itself be clean." The ruler should make reason supreme within his breast, should cultivate a nice discernment between good and evil, and carefully distinguish what things are good for what persons, and when and how. He must root out from his mind all bias and self-interest, and judge according to the abstract standard of right. To enable him the better to do so, he ought to meditate on the lives of the saints and to keep the fear of God ever before his eyes.[1]

Again, a ruler should be chief in action, transcending in his virtue even the virtuous. His station requires him to make the highest professions; hence he is likewise compelled to set the best example.[2]

Again, a ruler must be discreet in silence, profitable in speech; "that he may neither make known that which should be kept silent, nor be silent on that which should be made known. For as incautious words lead to error, so indiscreet

[1] *Reg. Past.* ii. 2. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 3.

silence leaveth them in error who might have been instructed." He must beware of loquacity, taking care not to talk inordinately even of what is right. Careless, unseasonable, babbling robs good advice of its effect.[1]

Again, a ruler must be near to all in sympathy, but exalted above all in contemplation; "that he may, by the bowels of kindness, transfer to himself the infirmity of others, and by the height of contemplation transcend even himself in his desire for things invisible; that he may neither, while he seeketh things on high, despise the weakness of his neighbours; nor, being suited to the weakness of his neighbours, abandon the desire of things on high." In this respect the type of the good ruler is found in the Apostle Paul, who could search out the secrets of the third heaven, and yet condescend to lay down rules for the regulation of the intercourse of carnal persons, "being joined at once to the highest and the lowest by the bond of charity."[2]

A ruler, once more, should, through humility, be companionable to those who do well, but, by his zeal for righteousness, alert to punish the sins of the transgressors. Nature, so Gregory teaches, made all men equal; but sin has sunk some below the level of the others.[3] Over those who are debased by sin the ruler must exercise authority for their own good. Yet he "has dominion rather over faults than over the brethren"; and those whom he corrects are, save for sin, his equals. Hence he must not be puffed up, but must endeavour "to preserve humility in the heart and discipline in practice," exercising at once "both mercy which is justly considerate, and discipline which is pitifully severe," and showing himself to his subjects "both as a mother by kindness and a father by discipline." "Let there be love then, but not enervating; let there be rigour, but not exasperating. Let there be zeal, but not immoderately fierce; and pity, but not sparing more than is good. That, while righteousness and mercy mingle in the post of government, he who is at the head may both soothe the hearts of those

[1] *Reg. Past.* ii. 4.

[2] *Ibid.* ii. 5.

[3] "Liquet, quod omnes homines natura aequales genuit, sed variante meritorum ordine alios aliis culpa postponit. Ipsa autem diversitas quae accessit ex vitio, divino iudicio dispensatur; ut quia omnis homo aeque stare non valet, alter regatur ab altero" (cf. *Mor.* xxi. 22).

that are under him, whiles he maketh them to fear, and yet in soothing bind them to a fearful reverence." [1]

Again, a ruler must not neglect external concerns in his attention to spiritual things, nor yet be so absorbed in earthly business as to lose sight of the things of heaven. A good bishop is frequently inclined to fall into the former error. "And no wonder their preaching is generally looked down upon; for while they reprove the deeds of transgressors, but yet do not furnish them with things needful for this present life, they are not heard with any willingness; for the word of doctrine maketh no way into the soul of a man in want, if the hand of mercy commend it not to his mind." A bishop, therefore, should bear with secular business out of consideration for his flock, not seeking it for love, but enduring it from compassion.[2]

A ruler should not set his heart on pleasing men, yet he should attend to that which ought to please them. He who inordinately desires popularity is in effect striving to attract men's love to himself instead of to his Master, and is therefore "an enemy of the Redeemer." Still, "it behoveth good rulers to desire to please men, but so as to draw their neighbours by the sweetness of their character, to a fondness for the Truth; not that they should desire to be loved themselves, but that they may make the affection borne to them, as it were a sort of road by which they may lead the hearts of their hearers to the love of their Creator. For it is hard for a preacher who is not loved, however right may be his warnings, to be heard gladly." [3]

Again, a ruler ought to be a person of penetration and discretion. He must be able to distinguish, for instance, between virtues and virtuous-seeming vices; for vices often feign to be virtues, niggardliness masquerading as frugality, lavishness as liberality, unbridled anger as spiritual zeal, and so forth. He must understand, moreover, how to deal with these vices when detected. For "sometimes the faults of subjects are discreetly to be winked at, but to be shown that they are winked at; sometimes even when they are openly acknowledged, they are in their season to be borne; but sometimes even those that are hidden are to be curiously sought out; sometimes they are to be gently reproved, at others sharply rebuked." [4]

[1] *Reg. Past.* ii. 6.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. 7.
[3] *Ibid.* ii. 8.
[4] *Ibid.* ii. 9, 10.

Lastly, a ruler must studiously meditate daily on the words of Holy Scripture, "that the words of the divine admonitions may restore in him the force of anxiety and of provident care in regard to the heavenly life, which familiarity with men's conversation incessantly destroyeth; and that he who is drawn to the old life by the society of worldly persons, may be continually renewed to the love of his spiritual country by the breathings of contrition." [1]

(3) The third part of the *Pastoral* is entitled, "After what manner the ruler that liveth well ought to teach and admonish those that are under him." In this part Gregory shows at considerable length how a bishop ought to accommodate his admonitions to the special wants and exigencies of his hearers. "For as Gregory Nazianzen of reverend memory hath taught long before us, one and the same exhortation is not suited to all, because all are not bound by the same manner of character. For ofttimes the things which profit some are bad for others. Inasmuch as for the most part the herbs also which feed some animals kill other some; and a gentle whistling which stilleth horses, setteth dogs astir. And the medicine which abateth one disease, giveth force to another; and the bread which strengtheneth the life of the vigorous, putteth an end to that of babes. The speech, therefore, of teachers ought to be fashioned according to the condition of the hearers, that it may both be suited to each for their own needs, and yet may never depart from the system of general edification. For what are the attentive minds of the hearers but, as I may so say, certain strings stretched tight on a harp? Which he that is skilful in playing, to the end that he may produce a tune which shall not be at variance with itself, striketh in various ways. And therefore the strings give back harmonious melody; because they are beaten indeed with one quill, but not with one stroke. Whence also every teacher, to the end that he may edify all in the one virtue of charity, ought to touch the hearts of his hearers out of one system of teaching, but not with one and the same address." [2] Gregory proceeds to illustrate this by a series of discussions in which he sets forward the manner of preaching suitable for various types and classes of persons. Among the thirty-six types and classes singled out

[1] *Reg. Past.* ii. 11.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. Prolog.

are the poor and the rich, the kind and the envious, those who are taciturn and those who waste time in much talking, the gluttonous and the abstemious, those that understand not the words of the holy Law aright and those that understand rightly but speak not of them with lowliness, those who lament sins of deed and those who lament sins of thought, those who are overcome with sudden passion and those who of set purpose are bound in sin, those who do not begin good works and those who never finish what they have begun. As an example of his method of dealing with the subject, I will quote his chapter on the appropriate way of preaching to the wise and the dull:[1]—

"Different admonitions are to be addressed to the wise in this world and to the dull. For the wise are to be exhorted to let go the knowledge which they possess; the dull also are to be admonished that they desire to know things which they know not. In the former this is first to be thrown down, that they esteem themselves wise; in the latter, whatever is known of heavenly wisdom is at once to be built up: because, seeing they are in no wise proud, they have, as it were, prepared their hearts to receive a building. With the other we must labour that they may become more wisely foolish, that they may abandon their foolish wisdom, and learn the wise foolishness of God; but to these we must preach that they pass over as from a nearer point, from that which is accounted folly to true wisdom. The one, for the most part, are converted by arguments of reasoning, the other better sometimes by examples. To the one doubtless it is profitable to fall beaten in their own disputations; but for the other it ofttimes sufficeth to know the praiseworthy deeds of others. Whence also the consummate teacher, 'a debtor to the wise and to the unwise,' when he was admonishing some of the Hebrews that were wise and some that were slower,—speaking to the former concerning the fulfilment of the Old Testament, overcame their wisdom by argument, saying, *Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.* But since he saw that some were to be drawn to him simply by examples, he added in the same Epistle: *Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation*—in order that conquering reason might

[1] *Reg. Past.* iii. 6.

subdue the one, and gentle imitation might persuade the other to mount to greater things."

The preacher's difficulty, says Gregory, is to address a large mixed congregation in such a way that his words may encourage the virtues of each one of his hearers without giving any countenance to the vices that are contrary to such virtues—for instance, to preach humility to the proud without increasing the terror of the timid, or liberality to the niggardly without encouraging the liberal to be prodigal. It is hard to make a single oration suitable to the wants of many hearers, diversely constituted.[1] Yet it is even harder to admonish a single individual who is subject to contrary vices and passions—sometimes over-joyous, at other times too much given to melancholy; sometimes too hasty, at other times too timid and cautious, and so on. In such cases the physician of the soul must in his discourse compound a medicine which may have power to check the moral disease in both directions; or, if this is impossible in any given case, he must devote all his energy to overcome the more dangerous ailment, tolerating the lesser for a time until the other be extinguished.[2] Finally, the preacher must use judgment in revealing deep things to feeble minds. "He must understand that he is not to draw the mind of his hearer beyond his strength, lest, so to speak, the string of the soul, being stretched beyond that it can endure, be broken; for all deep things ought to be covered over when there are many hearers, and scarcely opened to a few. Hence the Truth by His own mouth speaketh: *Who, thinkest thou, is that faithful and wise steward whom the Lord setteth over His household, that he may give them their measure of corn in his season?* Now by the measure of corn is signified the portion of the Word, lest when something that it cannot contain is poured into a narrow heart, it run over."[3]

(4) The fourth part, which consists of only one chapter, shows how a physician of the soul, while exercising his art on others, must see that he is sound himself. The better the work a man does, the greater is the danger of his becoming self-confident; and self-confidence is but a prelude to a fall. "Whence it is needful, when we are flattered by the abundance of our virtues, that the eye of the soul should come back to

[1] *Reg. Past.* iii. 36. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 37, 38. [3] *Ibid.* iii. 39.

her own weak points, and should put herself down in a wholesome manner; and look not at the right things which she hath done, but at those which she hath neglected to do; to the end that the heart, being broken by the remembrance of her weakness, may be the more strongly embellished in virtue before the Author of lowliness. For in general also, the Almighty God, though He perfect in great measure the souls of rulers, yet for this cause leaveth them imperfect in some small measure, that whiles they shine with wondrous virtues, they may be wearied with the irksomeness of their own imperfectness, and may in no wise set themselves up on account of great things, when they still toil in their strife against the smallest; but since they have not strength to overcome the lowest difficulties, they may not dare to boast themselves upon their principal actions."

Gregory thus concludes his treatise: "Behold, my good friend, constrained by the necessity of my reproof, and being intent to show what a Pastor ought to be, I, a foul painter, have portrayed a fair person; and I direct others to the shore of perfection, while I am yet tossing on the waves of transgression. But, I beseech thee, in this shipwreck of my life, do thou hold me up with the plank of thy prayers, that whereas my own weight maketh me to sink, the hand of thy worthiness may lift me up."

As will appear from the above, Gregory regards a bishop pre-eminently as a physician of souls. His principal functions are preaching and the exercise of discipline. In order to carry out his duties effectively, he is bound to study with anxious care every form of spiritual disease; and he must have the skill to devise remedies to suit all cases. He must be to his people as a kindly father, but also, if need arise, as a severe governor. For the souls of the people are committed to his charge; he is their ruler; and for their salvation he will be held responsible. The episcopal dignity, in short, is an office of government, to be administered by one who is skilled in the treatment of souls, for the benefit of the governed. And the principal instrument through which the work is carried on is that of preaching.

Gregory's little book was received with great appreciation. The Pope himself sent a copy of it to his friend Leander, the

archbishop of Seville,[1] who is said to have kissed it and to have made it known in all the churches in Spain. There is still extant a letter, written to Gregory by the saintly Licinianus of Carthagena, in which the *Book of Rules* is highly praised as "a palace of all virtues" and a treasure-house of sound teaching in conformity with that of "the holy ancient Fathers, Doctors, and Defenders of the Church—Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory Nazianzen": at the same time, a doubt is expressed whether the standard of fitness for the episcopate may not have been placed too high.[2] The Emperor Maurice, having obtained a copy from Anatolius, Gregory's deacon at Constantinople, had it translated into Greek by Anastasius of Antioch,[3] probably with a view to circulating it through the dioceses of the East. Augustine carried it into England, where, nearly three hundred years afterwards, it was paraphrased in the West Saxon tongue by King Alfred the Great, assisted by Plegmund his Archbishop, Asser his Bishop, and Grimbold and John his Mass-priests.[4] In 796 Alcuin wrote to an Archbishop of York: "Wherever you go, let the handbook of the holy Gregory go with you. Read and re-read it often. It is a mirror of the pontifical life, and a cure for every wound of diabolical deceit." In a series of Councils holden by command of Charlemagne in 813 at Mayence, Rheims, Tours, and Chalon-sur-Saône, the study of the *Pastoral Care* was enjoined on all bishops[5]; and a little later, as appears from the words of Hincmar archbishop of Rheims, this book, together with the Canons of the Church, was given into the hands of bishops at their consecration, and they were admonished, and solemnly promised, to observe what was written therein in their life, their teaching, and their decisions.[6] Enough has been said to show the value which was deservedly attached to this little treatise by the entire Church in the sixth and the following centuries. Its influence during this period can scarcely be overrated,—indeed, it is felt even now in its results. The maxims of Gregory have

[1] *Epp.* v. 53. [2] *Ibid.* i. 41*a*. [3] *Ibid.* xii. 6.

[4] King Alfred's West Saxon version of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, edited, with an English translation, by Henry Sweet, and published for the Early English Text Society, 1871.

[5] Concil. Mogunt. *Praef.*; Concil. Rhemens. *II.* c. 10; Concil. Turon. *III.* c. 3; Concil. Cabilon. *II.* c. 1.

[6] Hincmar *Opp.* tom. ii. p. 389 (ed. Paris, 1645).

moulded the Church. They have sensibly shaped the conduct and the policy of the Church's rulers, and, as a modern writer well expresses it, have "made the bishops who have made modern nations." The ideal which Gregory upheld was for centuries the ideal of the clergy of the West, and through them the spirit of the great Pope governed the Church, long after his body had been laid to rest beneath the pavement of St. Peter's.

The view which Gregory took of the episcopal dignity, its functions and duties, may be found in a condensed form in the long synodical letter[1] which, according to the usual custom, he forwarded after his consecration to his brother Patriarchs, John of Constantinople, Eulogius of Alexandria, Gregory of Antioch, and John of Jerusalem, and also, for particular reasons, to Anastasius ex-patriarch of Antioch. The matter of this lengthy circular is, for the most part, abstracted from the *Pastoral Care*, and there are several passages which are taken from it word for word. The last paragraph, however, contains the gist of the letter, a confession of the orthodox faith; and this section it may be advisable to quote. "Since with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation, I acknowledge that I receive and reverence the four Councils as I do the four Books of the Holy Gospel—I mean the Council of Nicaea, in which the perverse doctrine of Arius is destroyed; the Council of Constantinople, in which the error of Eunomius and Macedonius is refuted; the first Council of Ephesus, in which the impiety of Nestorius is judged; and the Council of Chalcedon, in which the wickedness of Eutyches and Dioscorus is condemned. These I

[1] "Synodica praeterea dicta epistola, quam pontifices recens electi ad alios pontifices mittebant, in qua fidei suae rationem exponebant. Quod quidem maxime obtinuit in summis pontificibus et patriarchis" (Du Cange). These letters were also called "Literae Enthronisticae" (Bingham, ii. 11, § 10). The origin of the name "Synodica" is doubtful, though Gregory appears to suggest a derivation. In *Epp.* ix. 147, speaking of the Synod of Chalcedon, venerated by all bishops, he writes: "Hinc est enim, ut quotiens in quatuor praecipuis sedibus antistites ordinantur, synodales sibi epistolas vicissim mittant, in quibus se sanctum Chalcedonensem synodum cum aliis generalibus synodis custodire fateantur." Very few synodical letters of the Popes before Gregory's time have been preserved, but the custom of sending such letters is at least as old as the time of Gelasius. In Gregory's correspondence reference is made to the synodical letters of Cyriacus of Constantinople (vi. 62; vii. 24, 30) and Isaac of Jerusalem (xi. 28).

embrace with full devotion and observe with entire approbation, because on them, as on a four-square stone, rises the structure of our holy faith; and any man, whatever be his life and actions, who does not hold to their entirety, really lies outside the building of the Church, even though he seem to be a stone in it. I also greatly reverence the Fifth Council, in which the letter attributed to Ibas is condemned as full of error, Theodore is convicted of having fallen into impious misbelief, by dividing the Person of our Mediator, making two subsistences, and the writings of Theodoret, in which the belief of the blessed Cyril is attacked, are refuted as reckless madness. All the persons whom these venerable Councils reject I reject, whom they reverence I reverence; for as they are confirmed by universal consent, if any man ventures to loose those whom they bind or to bind those whom they loose, he destroys not them but himself. Whoever, then, thinks otherwise, let him be anathema. But whoever holds the faith of these synods, to him be peace from God the Father, through Jesus Christ His Son, who liveth and reigneth with Him, God of the same Substance, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen."[1]

Such, then, was Gregory's view of the conduct, character, and belief of a good bishop. The following chapters will show how far he himself was able to realize his ideal, and in what respects he fell short of it.

[1] *Epp.* i. 24.

CHAPTER II

LIFE AND WORK IN ROME

In the time of John the Deacon there was in the Monastery of St. Andrew a likeness of Gregory, depicted on a circle of stucco in an apse behind the monks' cellarium. John, who inspected the portrait, has described it for us in detail, and from his account we are able to form some idea of the personal appearance of the great Pope. His face, we read, was well proportioned, combining the length of his father's and the roundness of his mother's countenance; his beard, like his father's, was somewhat tawny and sparse. His head was large and bald, surrounded with dark hair hanging down below the middle of the ear; two little curls bending towards the right crowned a forehead broad and high. The eyes were of yellow-brown colour, small but open; the eyebrows arched, long, and thin; the under-eyelids full. The nose was aquiline, with open nostrils. The lips were red and thick, the cheeks shapely, the chin prominent and well-formed. His complexion, swarthy and high-coloured, became flushed in later life. The expression was gentle. He was of medium height and good figure; his hands were beautiful, with tapering fingers well adapted to handle the pen of a ready writer. In the picture he was represented standing, clad in a chestnut-coloured chasuble over a dalmatic, and wearing a small pallium, which fell over his shoulders, breast, and side. His left hand grasped a Book of the Gospels, his right was raised to make the sign of the cross. A square frame—not the round nimbus—surrounded his head, proving that the portrait was executed in his lifetime. Beneath the picture was the following distich, of his own composing:—

> "Christe, potens Domine, nostri largitor honoris,
> Indultum officium solita pietate guberna."[1]

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 84. Gregory himself speaks of "mei molem corporis,"

Such was the appearance of Pope Gregory about the year 590. His health was extremely bad. The austerities of his monastic days had shattered his constitution, and during the last fourteen years of his life he was never free from illness. He suffered frightfully from indigestion, and from time to time he was entirely prostrated by attacks of slow fever. Moreover, he was a martyr to the gout, which appears at this period to have been a very common complaint among the upper classes of society, both ecclesiastical and lay. Nevertheless, in spite of his constant and increasing infirmities, Gregory did not permit himself any relaxation in the discharge of his duties. From morning to night, in sickness and in health, he was always busy. "He never rested," writes his biographer Paul.[1] "He was ever engaged in providing for the interests of his people, or in writing some composition worthy of the Church, or in searching out the secrets of heaven by the grace of contemplation." It is no wonder that this most indefatigable of men soon wore himself out. His frail body was unequal to the demands he made upon it. Nevertheless, up to the very last his fiery energy was unsubdued.

In the present chapter it is my intention to give some account of Gregory's life and work within the walls of Rome. I shall, therefore, pass over for the present his multitudinous and varied labours in connexion with the government of the Church at large, the conduct of the Lombard War, the regulation

from which we gather that he was of full habit of body. Towards the end of his life, however, he became sadly wasted and attenuated through illness (*Epp.* xi. 25). In Odo *Vita S. Greg. Tur.* 24 there is a pleasant anecdote which may imply that Gregory of Rome was a big man. According to Odo, Gregory of Tours visited his namesake at Rome, and the interview between the two Gregorys (which cannot, however, be regarded as historical) is thus described: "Cum igitur iste sacra Apostolorum limina expetisset, magna cum reverentia sanctus eum papa excepit, quem ad beati Petri Confessionem introducens, e latere constitit, praestolans quoad surgeret. Interim autem, ut erat ingenio profundissimus, secretam Dei dispensationem admirans, considerabat in huiusmodi hominem, erat enim statura brevis, tantam gratiam coelitus profluxisse. Quod ille mox divinitus persentiens, et ab oratione surgens, placidoque ut erat vultu ad papam respiciens: Dominus, inquit, fecit nos, et non ipsi nos; idem in parvis qui et in magnis. Cumque id suae cogitationi sanctus responderi cognosceret, ipsa sua deprehensione gavisus, gratiam quam hactenus in Gregorio mirabatur in magna veneratione deinceps habere coepit, sedemque Turonicam ita nobilitavit ut auream ei cathedram donaret, quae apud praefatam sedem in posterum servaretur."

[1] Paul. Diac. *Vita* 15.

of Western monasticism, the management of the Papal estates, the prosecution of the Papal claims, the sending of missions, the negotiations with the Emperor and with other princes, the suppression of heresy, schism, and paganism,—the thousand interests to which, as chief bishop of the West, he was obliged to devote his attention. These concerns, of course, occupied the greater part of his time. There was always some business to be attended to. Now he was called upon to give audience to a special envoy from Constantinople, now to preside over the trial of an accused bishop, now to dictate some minute directions to the governor of one of the Papal patrimonies. Sometimes schismatics or heretics came to Rome to lay their difficulties before the orthodox Pope and listen to his arguments; monks came to complain of the oppression of their diocesans; bishops asked his counsel about the government of their churches; soldiers and civil officials, ambassadors from the Lombards or the Franks, messengers from the Exarch, priests, abbats, Jews, slaves, women, crowded his ante-chambers, and clamoured for his attention.[1] This burden alone was more than sufficient for one man. But in addition to this Gregory was charged with the special care of the people of Rome. He was first of all bishop of the Eternal City, and as such was bound to look after the welfare of its inhabitants, providing for their spiritual as well as for their temporal necessities, and punctually performing all those duties which he had sketched out in his *Pastoral Care*. It is with this department of his work that I shall here attempt to deal.

It has been already noticed how Gregory, while apocrisiarius

[1] *Hom. in Ezech.* i. 11, § 6: "Cogor modo Ecclesiarum, modo monasteriorum causas discutere, saepe singulorum vitas actusque pensare; modo quaedam civium negotia sustinere, modo de irruentibus barbarorum gladiis gemere, et commisso gregi insidiantes lupos timere; modo rerum curam sumere, ne desint subsidia eis ipsis quibus disciplinae regula tenetur, modo raptores quosdam aequanimiter perpeti, modo eis sub studio servatae charitatis obviare." Cf. *ibid.* § 26: "Cuius cor in curis innumeris exparsum se ad se colligat? Quando etenim possum et ea quae circa me sunt sollicite omnia curare, et memetipsum adunato sensu conspicere? Quando possum pravorum nequitias insequendo corrigere, bonorum actus laudando et admonendo custodire, illis terrorem atque aliis dulcedinem demonstrare? Quando valeo et de his quae sunt necessaria fratribus cogitare, et contra hostiles gladios de urbis vigiliis sollicitudinem gerere, ne incursione subita cives pereant providere, et inter haec omnia pro animarum custodia plene atque efficaciter verbum exhortationis impendere?"

at Constantinople, persevered in the practice of monastic discipline, retaining amid the splendours of the Imperial court the ascetic usages of the conventual life. These habits he did not abandon after his removal to the Palace of the Lateran. He surrounded himself with the most learned clerks and the most pious monks, and lived with them in common,[1] "so that the Roman Church in Gregory's time resembled that Church as it was under the rule of the Apostles or the Church of Alexandria during the episcopate of St. Mark." [2] Among the most intimate of his associates the biographer mentions Peter the Deacon, whom Gregory represented as his interlocutor in the *Dialogues*, Aemilianus the notary, who took shorthand notes of his sermons, Paterius the notary, who edited excerpts from his writings, John the Defensor, who was afterwards sent into Spain, Maximianus, now once more Abbat of St. Andrew's Monastery, Augustine, Prior of St. Andrew's, and Mellitus, who were both sent afterwards as missionaries to Britain, Marinianus, a monk of St. Andrew's, who became Archbishop of Ravenna, Probus, who was sent to build a xenodochium at Jerusalem, and Claudius, afterwards Abbat of Classis, who had once taken notes of Gregory's lectures on the Old Testament. In the company of these and others Gregory strove to realize the monastic ideal of perfection. He cut off all luxuries. His diet was of the simplest, though it seems that within limits he was a little fastidious in what he took. His favourite wine, for instance, was called "cognidium," a liquor flavoured with resin; and this he procured direct from Alexandria, since at Rome, so he complained, "we get from the traders a drink which is called cognidium, but not the wine itself." [3] His personal appointments were so simple as to be almost mean. He continued to wear his coarse monk's dress, and even his pontifical vestments were of the plainest.[4] Yet, in his public appearances, he

[1] Compare his advice to Augustine (*Epp.* xi. 56*a*, i.).

[2] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 11, 12.

[3] Greg. *Epp.* vii. 37: "Quia collatum ac viritheum non libenter bibo, praesumenter cognidium requiro. . . . Nam nos hic a negotiatoribus nomen cognidii et non substantiam comparamus." Cognidium is interpreted *κωνίας οἶνος* = "vinum resinatum."

[4] Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 80 describes his pallium woven of white linen with no marks of the needle in it, his phylacteria of thin silver hung from the neck by a piece of poor cloth, and his narrow belt only a thumb's-width wide, and remarks that they are evidences of the monastic simplicity of Gregory's attire.

was careful to maintain a decent dignity. The horses, for example, on which he rode when he went in processions must be of finest breed. "You have sent me," he wrote to the manager of the Papal estates in Sicily,[1] "one sorry nag and five good asses. The nag I cannot ride because it is such a wretched one; and the asses, good as they are, I cannot ride because they are asses."

As soon as he became Pope, Gregory effected a reform in the constitution of the household. All the lay attendants were banished from the palace, and clerics were substituted in their place. This reform was further extended to the officials of the Papal Patrimony, all places being given to ecclesiastics. To laymen, in fact, nothing was left but the profession of arms and the occupation of agriculture.[2] Of course, one inevitable result of this change was that many laymen promptly adopted the tonsure, not from any religious conviction, but in order to retain their offices.[3] Nevertheless, the removal from the Lateran of the expensive crowd of "curled pages" and "exquisite young attendants,"[4] was undoubtedly a salutary measure. Grave clerics and ascetic monks were far better suited for the service of so austere a Pope.

Much of Gregory's time was taken up with secular business. To begin with, the defence of the city against the Lombards was a constant care. There was no Dux or Magister Militum resident in Rome, and consequently the Pope was frequently compelled by circumstances to assume the direction even in matters strictly military.[5] In this regard, perhaps, the thing which gave him most anxiety was the mutinous temper of the Imperial garrison. Thus in one of his letters we find him complaining that "the Theodosian regiment, who have been left here, not having received their pay, can scarcely be induced to guard the walls."[6] In another he writes: "If the Chartulary Maurentius comes, I pray you to help him to relieve the general distress, since, while the sword of the enemy

[1] Greg. *Epp.* ii. 38.

[2] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 15; cf. *Synod. Rom.* 595, c. 2.

[3] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 16.

[4] Cf. Bernard. *De Consid.* iv. 21: "Discant a te coepiscopi tui comatulos pueros et comtos adolescentes secum non habere. Certe inter mitratos discurrere calamistratos non decet."

[5] Paul. Diac. *Vita* 15.

[6] Greg. *Epp.* ii. 45.

threatens us incessantly from without, we are menaced by still greater dangers from the mutinous soldiery within." [1]

Again, Rome at this time was thronged to overflowing with indigent refugees. "From almost every part of Italy multitudes flocked into the city, fearing the swords of the Lombards." [2] These unhappy fugitives were many of them completely destitute, and there was no one in a position to relieve their necessities save the Pope. The rich patrician families who had once dispensed their lordly charities in the halls of the Roman palaces had long ago disappeared. Most of them had removed to Constantinople, having sold their Italian estates or presented them to the Roman Church; some had died out. As things were, the Pope was almost the only wealthy man remaining in the city, and to him and the Church which he represented the destitute people looked for the necessaries of existence.

To the task of providing for the famine-stricken populace, Gregory addressed himself with zeal. Every ecclesiastical district in Rome had its "deaconry," or office of alms,[3] which was under the superintendence of a deacon, and the accounts of which were kept by a general administrator.[4] Here the poor, the aged, and the destitute of the several regions received food on application. Those who had no shelter were further accommodated with lodging in the reception-houses for strangers.[5] Public distributions of corn were also made in the convents and basilicas. The corn so dispensed was obtained from Sicily. A small portion of the supply appears to have been furnished by the Emperor, but the greater part was provided by the Pope from the Papal

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 3.

[2] Paul. Diac. *Vita* 16.

[3] For the deaconries, see Smith *Dict. Ch. Ant.* art. "Diaconia." There were deaconries in other places beside Rome (see Greg. *Epp.* v. 25; x. 8).

[4] Greg. *Epp.* xi. 17: "Quia igitur te Iohannem religiosum intentionis tuae studio provocati mensis pauperum et exhibendae diaconiae elegimus praeponendum, ne qua tibi ex hac nascatur amministratione dubietas, hac te munitione prospeximus fulciendum, constituentes ut de hoc quod ad mensas pauperum vel diaconiae exhibitionem percepisti sive subinde perceperis erogandum, nulli unquam hominum quolibet modo seu ingenio cogaris ponere rationem vel aliquam debeas molestiam sustinere."

[5] There were several xenodochia in Rome. Pope Symmmachus, *e.g.*, founded or restored three (Ado. *Chron.* Migne, cxxiii. 106, B) and Pelagius II., "domum suam xenodochium fecit pauperum senum" (*Lib. Pont. Vita Pelag. II.*). Gregory's care for the Roman xenodochia is noted by Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 51, who also remarks that he sent the abbat Probus to found a xenodochium at Jerusalem (ii. 52).

estates, and was stored in the granaries of the Church. The importance of this supply for the life of the city may be judged from a letter which Gregory wrote, immediately after his accession, to the Praetor of Sicily. He implores the official to provide for the transmission of the full amount of grain that was needed. "Give attention to the matter," he wrote[1]; "for if what is transmitted be at all defective, it will be the death of not merely one single individual, but of the whole people together."

Some account of the general measures of relief is given by John the Deacon, in a remarkably interesting passage on Pope Gregory's method of distributing the revenues of the Roman Church.[2] "He turned into money the revenues of all the patrimonies and estates, according to the ledger of Gelasius (*ex Gelasiano polyptyco*), of whom he seems to have been a most careful follower, and having collected all the officials of the Church, the palace, the monasteries, the lesser churches, the cemeteries, the deaconries, the guest-houses both within and without the walls, he decided from the ledger (according to which the distribution is still made) how many solidi should be given to each, out of the above-mentioned payments in gold and silver. The sums thus decided on were distributed four times a year, namely, at Easter, on the festival of the Apostles (June 29), on the festival of St. Andrew (November 30), and on his own *fête*-day (September 3). Moreover, very early in the morning on Easter Day he was accustomed to sit in the Basilica of Pope Vigilius, near which he dwelt, to exchange the kiss of peace with the bishops, priests, deacons, and other notabilities, and on these occasions he gave to all of them an aureus apiece. On the festival of the Apostles and on the anniversary of his own consecration he gave them a sum of money (*mistos solidos*) and dresses of foreign material and make.

"On the first day of every month he distributed to the poor in general that part of the Church revenues which was paid in kind. Thus corn in its season, and in their several seasons wine, cheese, vegetables, bacon, meat, fish, and oil were most discreetly doled out by this father of the family of the Lord.[3] But

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 2. For Gregory's labours in connexion with the corn-supply, refer to i. 70, v. 36, and especially ix. 115.

[2] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 24–28.

[3] Compare Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 51: "prudentissimus paterfamilias Christi Gregorius"; and *ibid.* iii. 12.

pigments and other more delicate articles of commerce were offered by him as marks of respect to citizens of rank. Thus the Church came to be regarded as a source of supply for the whole community.

"To three thousand handmaids of God (whom the Greeks call *monastriae*) he gave fifteen pounds of gold for bed-furniture, and bestowed upon them for their daily provision eighty pounds annually. Of whom, writing to the royal lady Theoctista, he says: 'Their life is so noble, so given to tears and abstinence, that I believe that, but for them, not one of us could have subsisted for so many years in Rome amid the swords of the Lombards.' [1]

"Moreover, every day he sent out, by couriers appointed to the office, cooked provisions to the sick and infirm throughout the streets and lanes of all the city districts. To those of higher rank, who were ashamed to beg, he would send a dish from his own table, to be delivered at their doors as a present from St. Peter. And this he did before he himself sat down to dine. Thus not one of the faithful in Rome was without experience of the kindness of this Bishop, who most tenderly provided for the wants of all."

So particular was Gregory in seeing that this system of relief was effectively carried out, and so thoroughly did he consider himself responsible for the welfare of his people, that on one occasion, when a pauper was found dead in a small back room of a common lodging-house, the Pope abstained from celebrating mass for some days, sorrowing as though he were the man's actual murderer.[2]

John the Deacon adds:[3] "There exists to this day in the most holy archives of the Lateran Palace, a very large paper volume, compiled in Gregory's times, wherein the names of all persons of either sex, of all ages and professions, both at Rome and in the suburbs, in the neighbouring towns and even in the distant cities on the coast, are set down, together with details concerning their family names, their ages, and the payments which they received." The contents of this *pergrande volumen* were examined by the diligent biographer, but through fear of wearying his readers, he omits to specify them further. Nevertheless, it would have been interesting to learn

[1] Greg. *Epp.* vii. 23. [2] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 29. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 30.

how many descendants of ancient and noble families had their names enrolled among the recipients of the Church's bounty, being reduced to accept a scanty dole at the hands of the priesthood which their ancestors had persecuted and despised.

It was not alone with the revenues of the Church that Gregory showed himself liberal. Within his own palace and at his own expense he was ever ready to assist those in need. Like St. Paul's good bishop, he was "given to hospitality," and every day he was accustomed to entertain twelve strangers at his own table. John the Deacon records two legends which were current about these dinner-parties in his own time. The first tells how Gregory on one occasion was pouring water on the hands of his guests, as his custom was, when one of them to whom he was about to minister suddenly disappeared. The same night the Lord stood by him in a vision, and said, "On other days thou hast received Me in My members, but to-day thou hast received Myself."[1] The second legend is even better known. One day when Gregory was at the table he suddenly perceived that there was a thirteenth guest. On making inquiries, he found to his astonishment that the stranger was visible to himself alone, and his wonder grew when he observed that this mysterious one was constantly changing in appearance —now seeming to be a youth, now a white-haired old man. When the meal was over, he detained his guest and inquired his name, whereupon he was informed that it was none other than the angel who had appeared to him in the guise of a shipwrecked mariner at St. Andrew's Monastery, and who was now sent to be his guardian through life and to procure for him from God the granting of all his prayers.[2] The table at which Gregory entertained the angel unawares is still shown in Rome; and, though the legends are worth nothing as sober history, yet it is worthy of note that the custom of giving banquets to pilgrims at Easter dates apparently from the days of the great Pope.

The high estimation which was commonly entertained of Gregory's charity and self-denial may be illustrated by one more anecdote. A certain solitary of great virtue, who possessed nothing in the world but a cat, which he often caressed and fondled in his bosom, prayed God to show him the reward

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 22. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 23.

he would get hereafter for giving up so entirely the riches of this world. It was revealed to him in the night that he should share a heavenly mansion with Gregory, the Roman Pope. Whereat the holy man was grieved, thinking that his voluntary poverty would be ill rewarded if he obtained nothing more than one who lived amid such abundance of worldly wealth. Day and night, with sighs and groans, he compared his own destitution with Gregory's riches, until at last God said to him, in a dream, "It is not the possession of riches, but the lust for them that makes a rich man; why then dost thou dare to compare thy poverty with the riches of Gregory? Thou, in loving thy cat, and stroking it daily and giving it to no one, art more enamoured of wealth than he, who loves not his great riches, but dispenses them to all men liberally." The solitary rendered thanks to God for his rebuke, and ever afterwards prayed earnestly that he might be counted worthy to share a mansion with the world-despising Pope.[1]

While Gregory thus attended to the temporal welfare of his flock, he did not neglect their spiritual wants. We observed in the *Pastoral* how strongly he insisted on the duty of preaching, and with what elaboration he discussed the different kinds of discourse suitable for the various classes in the community. He believed, with St. Paul, that it was an indispensable qualification of a bishop that he should be "apt to teach." As he expresses it in one of his letters,[2] "Whoever comes to the priesthood, undertakes the office of a preacher." Hence, when he became Pope, he began forthwith to put his maxim into practice, and throughout his pontificate he looked upon the instruction of his people as one of the principal duties of his office. To secure an opportunity for making these public addresses, he appointed "stations."[3] At a church designated

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 60.

[2] Greg. *Epp.* i. 24: "Praeconis quippe officium suscipit, quisquis ad sacerdotium accedit, ut ante adventum iudicis, qui terribiliter sequitur, ipse scilicet clamando gradiatur. Sacerdos ergo si praedicationis est nescius, quam clamoris vocem daturus est praeco mutus?"

[3] "Stationes dicuntur ecclesiae, oratoria seu quaevis loca, ubi processiones ecclesiasticae moram faciunt, in quibus orationes fiunt aut decantantur antiphonae, vel denique sacrum missae ministerium peragitur; ex quo processiones ipsas stationes passim dictas observare est" (Du Cange). Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 18 says: "Stationes per basilicas vel beatorum martyrum

for the purpose he was met by the clergy and people, and thence he went in solemn procession to the church of the station. On the chief festivals the church chosen for the station was usually one of the great basilicas [1]—St. Peter, St. John Lateran, or St. Mary Major. On the festivals of the lesser saints the churches selected were generally those which were named after the saints commemorated, *e.g.* that of SS. Processus and Martinian, of St. Felicitas, of St. Agnes, of SS. John and Paul, or of SS. Nereus and Achilles. The Pope arrived on horseback, escorted by the deacons of the Church and the high officials of the palace. He was received at the door with elaborate ceremony, and from the secretarium proceeded to his throne behind the altar. As he passed up the nave seven candlesticks were borne before him, incense was burnt, and a psalm was chanted by the choir. The mass was then celebrated and a sermon was preached. During the delivery of the latter the Pope remained seated in a marble chair.

Forty sermons on the Gospels, preached by Gregory on these occasions, have come down to us. Twenty of them he recited himself; the rest, owing to ill health, he was unable to deliver in person, but he dictated them to notaries, by whom they were read to the people.[2] These compositions were afterwards published in two volumes, dedicated to Secundinus bishop of Taormina. In his prefatory letter the Pope complains that many of the "expositions" had already got into circulation without receiving his own corrections. "For some of the brethren, burning with zeal for the Word of God, took down my words before I was able to emend them with care as I intended. Whom I would compare to starving men who will not wait for their food to be properly cooked, but devour it half raw." That there might be a standard text, however, by which all copies might be corrected, Gregory deposited an

coemeteria, secundum quod hactenus plebs Romana quasi eo vivente certatim discurrit, sollicitus ordinavit."

[1] Nine of his extant sermons were preached in St. Peter's, six or perhaps seven in St. John Lateran, four in St. Lawrence, two apiece in St. Mary the Virgin, St. Agnes, and St. Clement. In the following churches one sermon was delivered: St. Paul without the Walls, St. Felicitas, St. Stephen, St. Andrew, SS. Marcellinus and Petrus, St. Sylvester, St. Felix, St. Pancratius, SS. Nereus and Achilles, SS. Procopius and Martinianus, SS. John and Paul, St. Mennas, SS. Philip and James, St. Sebastian.

[2] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 18; iv. 74; *Hom. in Ev.* 21. ad init.

authentic transcript of the homilies in the archives of the Roman Church.[1]

Of Gregory's popularity as a preacher there can be no question. Immense crowds of every age and profession followed him about from church to church, and hung with breathless interest on his utterances.[2] Not that he attracted them by the artifices of rhetoric. Oratory was far more cultivated by the Greek than by the Latin Fathers; and among the Latins Gregory was in this respect inferior to Augustine, and yet more inferior to Ambrose. His sermons were plain, popular expositions of passages of Scripture, delivered in a style that was simple and familiar. He rarely discussed the more profound problems of theology. He preferred to deal with practical topics, and he studied to present his views with clearness and precision. The approach of the judgment and the duty of penitence were his favourite themes. Though essentially popular, the sermons overflow with allegory and mystical interpretations, and it must be confessed that the meanings thus elicited are often extremely far-fetched; on the other hand, they abound in quotations from every part of Scripture, which are generally applied with great skill and felicity. Indeed, even in that age of Biblical students, Gregory's mastery of the matter and phraseology of the Bible was remarkable, and we might with justice apply to him the criticism passed by Dr. Neale on a preacher of the twelfth century: "He seems to quote the Bible because it is his own natural language, because his thoughts have been so accustomed to flow in Scripture channels, that they will run in no other; and it is sometimes difficult to tell, nor would he perhaps always have known himself, whether he was employing his own words or those of the inspired writings."

In the history of pulpit eloquence Gregory's sermons are remarkable, because in them we get the first approach towards a systematic use of anecdote and illustration. It is certainly true that the preachers before his time occasionally related a

[1] *Epp.* iv. 17*a*. This letter must be dated about the middle of the year 593. The sermons were preached by Gregory during the first two years of his pontificate. Ewald dates the last of them May 21, 593 (see his note on *Epp.* iv. 17*a*).

[2] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 19. The author of the *S. Gallen Life* c. 24, says that the Romans used to call Gregory "Golden Mouth" by reason of his eloquence.

story to enforce a moral. The practice, however, was not regular or frequent. The ancient Fathers, both Greek and Latin, did not trouble themselves about "exempla"; at any rate, they had no definite method of exemplification. The style of preachers like Ambrose and Leo was dignified and severe; they treated solemn subjects in a solemn way, and to them an extensive use of anecdote and instance would have seemed out of place. The sermons of Augustine were more popular and conversational. The great bishop took his people, as it were, into his confidence, spoke to them freely of his own life and conduct, defended himself against charges, rebuked injurious customs prevalent in his diocese: nevertheless, his popular oratory is widely different from that which was practised in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries by the Dominicans and Franciscans, who endeavoured to attract attention by crowding their discourses with all manner of tales, fables, legends of saints, classical myths, incidents of their own experience, quips, and jokes, which sometimes verged on the obscene and the blasphemous. The first step in the transition from the old grave style to that of Jacques de Vitry, Herolt of Basel, or Gabriel Bareletta, was taken by Gregory. Intensely anxious to make a real impression on his hearers—most of them, it must be remembered, people of defective education and limited intelligence—Gregory seems to have apprehended a truth afterwards propounded by De Vitry, that "many who are unmoved by a precept may be stirred by a story."[1] At any rate, in several of the homilies he introduced, usually towards the end—the place most favoured by the custom of later times—a narrative illustrative of the topic under discussion.[2] It cannot, indeed, be said that these anecdotes are particularly striking; they are certainly neither witty nor amusing. Most of them are tales of monks and visionaries, and in one instance we have a somewhat lengthy history of three members of Gregory's own family. Yet these stories, uninteresting as they are to us, and few in proportion to the number of the homilies,

[1] In the *Reg. Past.* iii. 6, speaking of the kind of preaching which was most effective with wise men and dullards respectively, Gregory says: "Illos plerumque ratiocinationis argumenta, istos nonnumquam melius exempla convertunt. Illis nimirum prodest, ut in suis allegationibus victi iaceant; istis vero aliquando sufficit, ut laudabilia aliorum facta cognoscant."

[2] See, for instance, *Hom. in Ev.* 12, 15, 19, 23, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40.

are very significant as marking the commencement of a revolution in the style of preaching. Gregory was the first great preacher who attempted, in anything like a systematic fashion, to introduce non-scriptural illustrations into his instructions, to drive home a religious truth with the help of an apposite story. He was the first to experiment in a method which at a later period was almost universally adopted. He opened the way for the popular orators of the Middle Ages.

In other respects the style of the *Homilies on the Gospels* is easy, lucid, and unstudied.[1] Without labouring after ornament and rhetorical effects, the preacher says what he has to say with grace and a certain natural smooth eloquence, to which it must have been pleasant to listen. He was clearly never at a loss for a suitable word and pointed phrase, and many of his dicta scattered up and down the homilies are worth remembering. The following have been taken at random, and are fairly representative of his manner: "Be not anxious about what you have, but about what you are."[2] "If we fear death before it comes, we shall conquer it when it comes."[3] "The very acts of Christ are precepts."[4] "If the work of God could be comprehended by reason, it would be no longer wonderful, and faith would have no merit if reason provided proof."[5] "To do penance is to bewail the evil we have done, and to do no evil to bewail."[6] "Patience is the root and guardian of all the virtues."[7] "Let us look sideways, as it were, on all that is done in this world."[8] "The death of the martyrs is blossoming in the faith of the living."[9] "The iron of the soul never gets a sharp point unless it be filed down by the malice of enemies."[10] "Joy is heightened by the contrast of torment, as the black background in a picture makes the white or red stand out more clearly."[11]

As a specimen of his eloquence, we will quote a passage from the first of the sermons, delivered in St. Peter's on the

[1] The Benedictine Biographer thus writes of the sermons: "In his nihil mollius, nihil comptius occurrit; sed pura et casta, sine fuco, sine lenocinio fluit eloquentia. Ponderosa verba, graviores sententiae, quales et Scripturae sanctae maiestati et tanti sacerdotis dignitati convenirent; magno cum delectu inserta ex divinis libris testimonia, non per vim tracta sed quasi sponte adducta" (*Vita* ii. 3, § 8).

[2] *Hom. in Ev.* xiii. § 6. [3] *Ibid.* xiii. § 6. [4] *Ibid.* xvii. § 1.
[5] *Ibid.* xxvi. § 1. [6] *Ibid.* xxxiv. § 15. [7] *Ibid.* xxxv. § 4.
[8] *Ibid.* xxxvi. § 11. [9] *Ibid.* xxxviii. § 4.
[10] *Ibid.* xxxviii. § 7. [11] *Ibid.* xl. § 8.

Second Sunday in Advent of the year 590. The Gospel for the day (Luke xxi. 25–32) naturally suggested the thought on which Gregory so often dwelt as the chief hope and solace of God's people in those troubled times,—the thought of the approaching destruction of the world and the consequent redemption of the elect. The signs of the end were already manifest. The elect should be filled with joy; yet at the same time, they should be led to anxious thoughts and fears and earnest activity of life. "Behold, my brethren, we now see what before we only heard of. The world is beset with evils which are daily new and growing greater. You see how small a remnant is left of the innumerable people of Rome: yet still each day the scourges strike us, sudden disasters bear us down, new calamities afflict us without warning. As in youth the body is vigorous, the breast is strong and sound, the neck is muscular, the lungs are full of breath, but in old age the body is bent, the neck is withered and stoops, the breast labours with frequent sighs, the strength fails, the speaker pants for breath and his words are broken—for even if there be no disease, the very health of an old man is only sickness—so is it with the world. In former years it was vigorous with youth, it was strong to multiply the race of men, fresh in health and rich in resources. But now it is weighed down by the very burden of its age, and is hurried on by its increasing maladies to a speedy dissolution. Give not your heart, then, my brethren, to that which, as yourselves see, cannot last. Fix in your minds the Apostle's warning: *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* Two days ago, my friends, by a sudden whirlwind, ancient trees were uprooted, houses were destroyed, and churches overthrown to the foundations. How many men, strong and healthy, were making plans that evening for the morrow! Yet that same night they died a sudden death, caught in the snares of destruction. Most dearly beloved, consider this. The Judge invisible moved but the breath of a little wind, raised but the storm of a single cloud: yet He made the earth to tremble, He shook the foundations of very many buildings to their fall. We cannot endure Him when He plagues us with a very little cloud; what then shall He do when He shall come Himself and His wrath shall blaze forth for the punishment of the

wicked? . . . Behold, as I said before, God moved the air, and the earth trembled. Who, then, shall endure when He shall move the heavens? And what can I call those terrors which we see but the harbingers of the wrath to come? We ought therefore to consider that these tribulations differ from the final tribulation even as the person of the herald differs from the power of the judge. Think, then, beloved, on that day with all earnestness, amend your lives, change your habits, resist and conquer your besetting sins, punish your evil deeds with weeping. For hereafter you will behold the advent of the Eternal Judge more fearlessly in proportion as you now with fear anticipate His severity."

In addition to the *Homilies on the Gospels*, Gregory composed twenty-two others on the Prophet Ezekiel, which I shall have occasion to refer to later on. Eight years after they were delivered, Gregory corrected these discourses and sent them to Marinianus of Ravenna, who, it appears, was a diligent student and admirer of Ambrose and Augustine. The Pope thought it necessary to apologize for his work, but he expressed the hope that the coarser food which he provided might be of service in making Marinianus return with greater gusto to the delicate banquets spread out in the older Fathers.[1]

While Gregory sought, by assiduous preaching, to inculcate on his people sound principles of morals and religion, he was at the same time unceasingly watchful to eradicate error. Hence he exerted himself to oppose the misguided zeal of certain puritans in Rome, who taught that the Jewish sabbath ought to be observed, and that the Lord's Day should be kept so strictly that even the work of washing ought to be suspended.[2]

[1] Greg. *Epp.* xii. 16*a*. The sermons on Ezekiel were preached in 593–594. Concerning their composition, the *S. Gallen Life* c. 26 has a well-known legend. "Super hunc virum Dei vidisse quidam dicitur de suis satis ei familiaris albam sedisse columbam, cum in praedictum Ezechielem fecit homilias. Cui scilicet videnti valde pro illo iratus accessu percepit, ne, quandiu ipse viveret in carne, id alicui indicaret, ne scilicet aperto caelestis signo claritatis, fama extolli foris videretur humana." (See below, Chap. XI.)

[2] Greg. *Epp.* xiii. 3. On the observance of Sunday, Greg. Tur. *H. F.* x. 30 writes: "Sanctus est hic dies, qui in principio lucem conditam primus vidit, ac Dominicae resurrectionis testis factus emicuit; ideoque omni fide a Christianis observari debet, ne fiat in eo omne opus publicum." He says that in the town of Limoges several people were killed by fire from heaven because they worked on this day. Several instances are recorded by the same author

This last doctrine is extraordinary enough, but it seems to have gained a wide acceptance among the more rigid Romans. At any rate, we know that an Irish saint named Conall, who visited Rome some time before 594, induced his compatriots, on his return, to submit to a regulation prohibiting all shaving and washing on Sunday; apparently in the serious belief that this puritanical observance was approved by the Roman Church.[1] Gregory, however, with his usual sound sense, refused altogether to countenance this excessive sabbatarianism. "If men desire to wash," he wrote, "for the luxury and the pleasure of it, we do not permit them even on week-days; but if they desire it as a matter of physical necessity, we do not forbid them even on Sundays."

One object in which the Pope was greatly interested was the reclaiming of Arian churches for Catholic worship. Since the fall of the Gothic monarchy the Arians had not been permitted to hold services in Rome, but the churches in which they had formerly worshipped had not been generally resumed.[2] Gregory thought it a pity that so many fine buildings should remain disused, and he determined to reconsecrate them for Catholic worship. Hence in 593 we find him writing to his agent in Campania, to inform him of his intention to dedicate an Arian church, near the Merulan Palace, in the Third Region, to St. Severinus of Noricum, and to request that relics of the saint might be forwarded to Rome.[3] Before this, however, in

of punishments for working on Sunday: *Mirac.* i. 16; ii. 11; *De Mirac. S. Martini* iii. 3, 7, 29, 45, 55; iv. 45; *Vitae Patrum* 7, § 5 (combing the hair on Sunday). It was further considered a sin to work on Saturday after sundown, and those who so offended are alleged to have been miraculously punished: Greg. Tur. *De Mirac. S. Martini* iii. 31, 56. A nun was punished after death for having washed her head on a Friday: *Glor. Confess.* 5. In *De Mirac. S. Martini* ii. 24, Gregory describes a monster who had been begotten "nocte Dominica," and adds: "Sed quia dixi parentibus eius hoc ob peccatum evenisse per violationem noctis Dominicae, cavete, O viri, quibus sunt coniuncta coniugia. Satis est aliis diebus voluptati operam dare; hanc autem diem in laudibus Dei impolluti deducite. Quia qui in ea coniuges simul convenerint, exinde aut contracti, aut epileptici, aut leprosi filii nascuntur." The following general prohibition is significant of the feeling about Sunday in Gaul at this period: "Praedica ut se omnis homo a rapinis, periuriis et usuris abstineat, et in die Dominica nullum opus, absque solemnitatibus mysticis, agat" (*De Mirac. S. Martini* ii. 40).

[1] The rule of Conall is extant under the title Cain Domnaigh.

[2] Some certainly had been reconsecrated (see *Lib. Pont. Vita Johannis I.*)

[3] Greg. *Epp.* iii. 19.

591 or 592, he had already reconsecrated a celebrated Arian church in the Suburra, which Ricimer had built or embellished, and wherein his body had been buried. Gregory dedicated this building in honour of St. Agatha of Catania; and he has left us a curious account of certain strange occurrences at the time of the ceremony, some of which, he says, were known to the people generally, while the others rested on the testimony of the priest and guardians of the church[1]:—

"There was in the Suburra a closed church which had formerly belonged to the Arians. Two years ago I determined to dedicate it to the Catholic Faith, and to deposit therein the relics of St. Sebastian and St. Agatha. And this accordingly was done. We came with a great multitude of people and entered the church, singing praises to Almighty God. While the solemn mass was being celebrated, and the people were crowded together from the narrowness of the space, some of those who were standing outside the sacrarium suddenly felt a pig running about between their feet. Each man felt it and spoke of it to his neighbour. The pig made for the door, and great was the wonder excited among those by whom it passed; yet, though they felt it, no one could see it. This prodigy was granted by the Divine Mercy, that all men might clearly know that the foul inhabitant was departing from the place.[2]

"After the celebration of the mass, we left the church; but on the same night there was a great noise among the rafters, as if some one were running about there. On the following night the noise increased, and suddenly there was a terrific crash, as though the whole church had been overthrown from its very foundations. This quickly ceased, and afterwards the Old Enemy gave no further trouble. But the terrible noise which he made showed how unwilling he was to leave the place he had possessed so long.

[1] Greg. *Dial.* iii. 30; *Epp.* iv. 19; *Lib. Pont. Vita Greg. I.*; Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 31, 32. The name of St. Agatha was inserted in the Canon of the Mass by Gregory, according to Aldhelm *De Virgin.* 42. A church in Rome had been already dedicated to her by Pope Symmachus; another was dedicated by Gregory the Second in 726. "The constant intercourse with Sicily explains the adoption of the insular saint into the Roman worship."

[2] Those who have been in a great crowd in a Roman church, and know how the children manage to squeeze themselves through it, will be able, perhaps, to make a shrewd guess at the real cause of the phenomenon here reported.

"A few days afterwards, when the sky was quite clear, a cloud from heaven settled upon the altar, covering it as with a veil, and filling the whole church with a perfume so strange and sweet, that, though the doors were open, no one ventured to go in. The priest, the guardians of the church, and those who had come to mass, saw the cloud, smelt the sweetness of the mysterious odour, and were unable to enter.

"On another day, when the lamps were hanging in the church unlighted, they were kindled with fire from heaven. Again, a few days later, after the celebration of mass, the sacristan extinguished the lights and went home. On returning to the church shortly afterwards, he found them burning brightly. He supposed he had not properly extinguished them, so this time he put them out with great care, and then shut up the church. But, when he returned three hours later, he found the lights, which he had extinguished, burning. And this took place that all might know that the church had passed from darkness into light."

The mention of lights reminds us of the fact that Gregory granted the patrimonial estate of Aquae Salviae, together with two gardens on the banks of the Tiber, and some other lands, to the Basilica of St. Paul, to maintain the lights in honour of the Apostle "who filled the whole world with the light of his preaching."[1] The deed of gift was inscribed on a marble tablet and affixed to the wall of the portico of the church. Another donation of lands was made to St. Peter's, where also Gregory placed over the altar a "ciborium," or baldacchino, supported by four silver pillars.[2] He further intended to restore the fabrics of both churches, and for this purpose arranged that beams should

[1] Greg. *Epp.* xiv. 14. The custom of burning lights at the shrines of saints and martyrs, defended by St. Jerome (*Contra Vigilant.* § 7), had become common in Gregory's time. Compare Greg. *Dial.* iii. 24; Greg. Tur. *De Glor. Confess.* 69, 70, 71; *Mirac.* i. 15; *De Mirac. S. Martini* i. 15.

[2] *Lib. Pont. Vita Gregorii I.* Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 68 says: "In basilica beati Petri apostoli fastigium de argento purissimo, quod a Leone tertio pontifice in basilica Sixtiana sanctae Mariae nomini dedicata translatum est, fabricavit, et in basilica beati Pauli apostoli super altare nihilominus aliud fastigium procuravit." Such ciboria or fastigia were often extremely costly. Pope Leo III. erected one in St. Peter's of silver-gilt, which weighed 2704 lbs. (*Lib. Pont. V. Leonis III.*). See the description of the ciborium in St. Sophia (Paul. Silent. *Descr. S. Soph.* 720, *sqq.*, and the learned notes of Du Cange *in loc.*).

be sent from Bruttii[1]; but it is doubtful whether these repairs were actually carried out.[2] Meanwhile he was careful to see that the services were duly performed both here and in the rest of the Roman basilicas. He ordered masses to be celebrated over the bodies of the Apostles,[3] and hearing that the Church of St. Pancras was shamefully neglected by its presbyters, so that even on Sunday there was often no one in attendance to say mass, he gave the basilica into the charge of a congregation of monks, who were to arrange for a daily performance of the "work of God" at "the most holy body of the blessed Pancratius."[4] Gregory, however, was not one of the building Popes. "Other Pontiffs," says Paul the Deacon,[5] "gave themselves to building churches and adorning them with gold and silver; but Gregory, while not entirely neglecting this duty, was wholly engrossed in gaining souls, and all the money he could lay his hands upon he was anxious to disburse and bestow upon the poor." It is interesting to note, in passing, that the state of the aqueducts caused Gregory serious anxiety, and, although he could do nothing himself, he made strong representations to the Prefect of Italy to get them restored. "They are so overlooked and neglected," he wrote, "that unless more care is taken they will shortly fall into complete ruin."[6] No notice, however, appears to have been taken of this appeal.

On the 5th of July, in the year 595, a synod was held by Gregory in the Basilica of St. Peter.[7] It consisted of twenty-three bishops, all (save the Bishop of Ravenna) from the suburbicarian provinces, and of thirty-five priests of titular churches. The deacons and the rest of the Roman clergy were present, but they had no seats in the Council, and did not sign the decrees. Various matters were discussed, and, on the motion of Gregory, six resolutions were carried.

The first decree forbade deacons to conduct the musical part

[1] Greg. *Epp.* ix. 124–127.

[2] Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 68 says in a general way: "Omni vitae suae tempore sicut novas basilicas minime fabricaret, ita nimirum fabricatarum veterum sarta tecta cum summo studio annualiter reparabat."

[3] *Lib. Pont. Vita Greg. I.*; Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 20.

[4] Greg. *Epp.* iv. 18.

[5] Paul. Diac. *Vita* 16.

[6] Greg. *Epp.* xii. 6.

[7] Greg. *Epp.* v. 57*a*. To this synod Gregory refers in *Epp.* v. 62; cf. Bæda *H. E.* ii. 1; Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 5.

of the mass, with the exception of the chanting of the Gospel. "In the holy Roman Church," said Gregory, "a very reprehensible custom has for some time existed, namely, that certain singers are selected for the ministry of the altar, who, being ordained deacons, devote themselves to singing, instead of to their proper duties of preaching and almsgiving. The result frequently is that while search is made for a good voice, no care is taken to provide that the life shall be such as harmonizes with the holy ministry. And so the singer enrages God by his conduct, while he delights the people with his accents." It was accordingly ordered that the deacons should in future abstain from singing. The Gospel in the mass alone must be chanted by them, the psalms and other musical portions of the service being left to the subdeacons and lower clergy.[1]

The second decree referred to the personal attendants of the Pope. "In times of neglect a shameful custom has become established, namely, that lay servants should wait upon the Pontiffs of this See, even in the privacy of their chambers. And whereas the life of a bishop ought always to serve as an example to his disciples, the clergy generally know nothing of his private life, which, however, is known to his lay servants." It was therefore decreed "that certain persons shall be selected from among the clergy or the monks to attend upon the Pontiff in his bedchamber, so that the life of the ruler may be witnessed in all its privacy by men who can take example and profit from what they see."

The third ordained that the rectors of the Patrimony of the Church should on no pretext fix "titles"[2] or notices proclaiming ownership, on estates which they imagined to belong to the Church. The claims of the Church must be supported not by violence, but by justice. Further, any bishop who ordered such "titles" to be affixed, or neglected to punish those who affixed them without authorization, would do so in future at his peril.

The fourth decree suppressed a curious Roman custom. "Whereas the faithful venerate us, unworthy though we be, with the reverence due to the blessed Apostle Peter, we ought

[1] See below, p. 276.

[2] For "tituli," see Greg. *Epp.* i. 39*a*, 63; v. 38. "Tabulae ligneae vel lapideae in limite agri constitutae et nominibus possessorum ornatae fuisse videntur tituli" (Ewald).

always to consider our infirmity, and to studiously decline the burden of this reverence. From the love of the faithful the custom has arisen of paying an undeserved honour to the rulers of this See, namely, that when their bodies are carried to the tomb, they are covered with dalmatics,[1] and these dalmatics the people tear to shreds and divide among themselves, reverencing them as something sacred. And although there are in the city many coverings from the sacred bodies of the Apostles and martyrs, men take from the bodies of sinners these shreds which they store up from a feeling of deep reverence." In future, therefore, it was enacted that no coverings should be put upon the bier at the funeral of a Pope.

The fifth decree forbade any fees to be exacted for ordination, or conferring the pallium, or for preparing the charters relating thereto.[2] "The Pontiff lays his hand upon the bishop who is to be ordained, and the minister reads the Gospel, and the notary writes out the letter of confirmation, and it is just as wrong for the lesser officials to exact money for using their voice or pen, as it is for the Pontiff to exact money for laying on his hand." But though no fees could be demanded as of right, a present, if freely offered, might be accepted. "For the gift is not defiled by sin when it is not extorted by the improper solicitations of the recipient."

The sixth decree ordained that slaves who desired to become monks should pass through a course of probation, retaining the dress of laymen, before they were admitted into the number of the brethren. If their conduct during this probation was approved, they should be emancipated from the service of their masters, that they might undergo "a still stricter servitude in the worship of God."

[1] For this custom, compare *Dial.* iv. 40. It seems that the dalmatic was "in some special way associated with the local Roman Church, and considered the peculiar privilege of ecclesiastics of that Church, others being only allowed to use it by special permission." For example, Pope Symmachus granted the use of dalmatics to the deacons of Arles (*Vita S. Caesar.* i. c. 30), Gregory to the bishop and archdeacon of Gap (*Epp.* ix. 219). Cf. Walafrid Strabo *De Rebus Eccles.* 24.

[2] According to Imperial law, presents might be made (1) by a new Pope to the bishops and clergy, not more than twenty pounds of gold; (2) by bishops, one hundred solidi for enthroning and three hundred solidi to the notaries and officers of the consecrator; (3) by clerks to the bishop who ordained them, not more than the value of a year's produce of the benefice.

These decrees were many of them only a formal confirmation of regulations made by Gregory, on his own authority, in the early years of his pontificate. The reform of the Pope's household, for instance, had been undertaken immediately after his accession, the affixing of tituli had been forbidden in 591.[1] Moreover, in the beginning of his pontificate, Gregory had abolished at least one illegitimate source of revenue enjoyed by the Roman clergy, namely, the fees paid for burial in consecrated ground.[2] The synod of 595, however, sanctioned in a regular manner these measures of the Pope, and gave to them the force of ecclesiastical law.

I pass now to the examination of Gregory's reputed reform of the Roman Liturgy. It has already been noticed incidentally how anxious Gregory was to provide for the exact performance of the offices of the Church, and in particular for the constant celebration of the Holy Eucharist. He himself was accustomed, it seems, to say mass every day, and it was his wish that all his clergy should in this respect imitate his example. He made special provision for daily masses in the Churches of St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Pancras; and he devoted much of his attention to developing the doctrine of the Eucharist.[3] Besides this, he introduced certain modifications into the Roman Liturgy, making at least two alterations of considerable importance. These reforms it is my intention now to consider in detail.

The subject of Gregory's liturgical work is involved in so much difficulty and uncertainty, and the views taken of it by leading authorities are so widely at variance, that it is impossible to put forward any judgment about it without great hesitation. The researches of Mgr. Duchesne, however, seem to show fairly conclusively that the extent of the Gregorian innovation was not so great as has been generally supposed. Duchesne's conclusions will be duly noted in the sequel. But before dealing with the vexed question of the Sacramentarium Gregorianum, it will be best to state clearly what changes were admittedly made by Gregory in the Liturgy and the ceremonial therewith connected.

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 39*a*. [2] Greg. *Epp.* viii. 35.
[3] See below, Bk. III. Part II. § 3.

The changes in the Liturgy, then, were three in number. (*a*) First, to the prayer "Hanc igitur" in the Canon of the Mass, he added the words, "diesque nostros in tua pace disponas, atque ab aeterna damnatione nos eripi, et in electorum tuorum iubeas grege numerari."[1] (*b*) Secondly, he ordered the Pater Noster to be recited at the end of the Canon, immediately before the fraction of the bread.[2] Before his time the fraction followed at once on the conclusion of the Canon, and the Lord's Prayer was, in all probability, said after the fraction. Gregory thus transferred the Lord's Prayer from its old place to the end of the Canon, and the reason which he gives for doing so is interesting. "We say the Lord's Prayer," he writes, "immediately after the Canon, because it was the custom of the Apostles to say this very prayer alone at the consecration of the Host; and it seemed to me very incongruous that we should say over the Oblation the Canon composed by a scholastic, and should not say over His Body and Blood the prayer composed by our Redeemer Himself." (*c*) Thirdly, he ordered that the Alleluia should be chanted, after the Gradual, at other times besides the season of Easter-tide, to which its use in the Roman Church had hitherto been confined.[3]

Again, in matters of ceremonial connected with the mass, Gregory instituted two reforms. (*d*) He forbade the subdeacons to wear chasubles when they proceeded to the altar for the celebration[4]; (*e*) and he forbade the deacons to perform any musical portion of the service, with the single exception of the chanting of the Gospel.[5]

[1] *Lib. Pont. Vita Greg. I.*; Baeda *H. E.* ii. 1; Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 17.

[2] Greg. *Epp.* ix. 26; Joh. Diac. ii. 20. Gregory says: "Orationem Dominicam idcirco mox post precem dicimus, quia mos apostolorum fuit, ut ad ipsam solum modo orationem oblationis hostiam consecrarent, et valde mihi inconveniens visum est, ut precem quam scholasticus composuerat super oblationem diceremus et ipsam traditionem quam redemptor noster composuit super eius corpus et sanguinem non diceremus. Sed et Dominica oratio apud Graecos ab omni populo dicitur, apud nos vero a solo sacerdote." It looks as though Gregory believed that the Apostolic Liturgy knew of no other formula than the Pater Noster (Duchesne *Origines du Culte Chrétien* p. 184). Yet the passage may mean that the Apostles only consecrated at this prayer, *i.e.* the consecration was not finished until it was said.

[3] Greg. *Epp.* ix. 26; Joh. Diac. ii. 20.

[4] Greg. *Epp.* ix. 26; Joh. Diac. ii. 20.

[5] Greg. *Epp.* v. 57*a*.

These five innovations are the only ones that can be positively attributed to Gregory in connection with the Roman Liturgy. We may add, however, that he sanctioned with his authority a custom which appears to have been adopted in the Roman Church about the beginning of the century, that, namely, of the alternate chanting by the singers and the people of the "Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison," at the commencement of the mass.[1] But it seems unlikely that this use was originally introduced by Gregory; for we gather from a canon of the Council of Vaison, that the Kyrie was sung at Rome as early as 529.[2]

Some of the above-mentioned usages—those relating to the Alleluia, the Kyrie, the Pater Noster, and the vestments of subdeacons—are alluded to by Gregory himself in a letter which he wrote in 598 to John, bishop of Syracuse.[3] It appears that certain persons in Sicily who were enthusiasts for everything Roman, had complained that the innovations in question had been copied from the usages of the Church of Constantinople, and they asked, "How can the Pope expect to hold the Byzantine Church in check, when he thus goes out of his way to imitate her uses?" These complaints Gregory endeavoured to answer in his letter to John. He argued, in the first place, that even supposing—what was not, in fact, the case—that these customs had been borrowed from the East, there was even yet no reason for such excessive alarm. "For who can doubt that the Church of Constantinople is subject to the Apostolic See? Yet, if this or any other Church has anything that is good, I am quite prepared to copy it. That man indeed is a fool who so prides himself on his superiority that he thinks scorn to learn what is good from his inferiors." But, in the second place, Gregory denied outright that there was any truth in the allegation. None of the innovations was borrowed from Constantinople. The more frequent singing of the Alleluia, and the direction about the subdeacons, represented but a revival of ancient Roman customs; in the other cases there were marked differences between the Roman and Constantinopolitan uses. Thus the Pater Noster in the East was recited by all the people, at Rome by the priest alone. The Kyrie eleison, again, in the East was not said responsively, but by all the people together,

[1] Greg. *Epp.* ix. 26. [2] Conc. Vasens. a. 529, c. 3. [3] *Epp.* ix. 26.

the Christe eleison not being said at all. In spite of his somewhat elaborate defence, however, it appears as if Gregory was not entirely successful in rebutting the charges of the Sicilian Romanists.

The undoubted Gregorian innovations, then, (leaving aside the regulations concerning the singing of deacons, and the vestments of subdeacons), amount to this—that he ordered the Alleluia after the Gradual to be more frequently chanted than heretofore, and that he introduced two modifications into the Canon, inserting some words into the prayer "Hanc igitur," and altering the place of the Pater Noster. What we have now to inquire is, whether Gregory did anything more than this. Were his liturgical changes confined to the above three points? Or are we justified in imputing to him a work of far greater magnitude—nothing less than a complete revision of the entire Liturgy?

Now, Gregory's biographer, John the Deacon, writing in the last half of the ninth century, makes the following statement—that Gregory undertook a revision of the Sacramentary called after Pope Gelasius (Gelasianum Codicem); that in the course of this work he effected certain changes in the arrangement, omitted a good deal, and added a little of his own; and finally that, for the convenience of the celebrant, he brought together into a single book the various portions of the service, which before his time were distributed over several volumes.[1] On the authority of this statement, it has hitherto been generally believed that Gregory found in use in the Roman Church the long and complicated Sacramentarium Gelasianum, and further that he abbreviated and otherwise simplified this mass-book, producing a revised edition, with which his own name has become associated, and which represents the basis and groundwork of the modern Roman Missal. Or, to put the same thing briefly, it is said that the Gregorian Sacramentary is the work of Pope Gregory himself.

This theory, however, rests for support almost entirely on the evidence of John the Deacon, who not only flourished nearly three hundred years after Gregory's time, but was, more-

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 17: "Sed et Gelasianum Codicem de missarum solemniis, multa subtrahens, pauca convertens, nonnulla vero superadiiciens, pro exponendis evangelicis lectionibus in unius libri volumine coarctavit."

over, a writer who had little regard for historical accuracy. Had the above-mentioned statement been advanced by one of Gregory's contemporaries, or by a careful author like Bede or Paul the Deacon, it would necessarily have been of very decisive value. But little weight can be attached to the testimony of John, unless it can be shown to be corroborated by other more credible witnesses, or at least by the internal evidence of the Gregorianum itself. Let us see whether any such additional support is forthcoming.

First, as concerns the evidence of writers earlier than John, In the first half of the ninth century Walafrid Strabo says that Gregory revised the Liturgy, and arranged in order the masses and consecrations.[1] Again, at some period between 784 and 791 Pope Hadrian the First sent by request to Charlemagne an "unadulterated" copy of "the Sacramentarium arranged long ago by our holy predecessor, the God-inspired Gregory."[2] Again, somewhat earlier in this century, Egbert of York speaks of the Sacramentary of Gregory, and asserts that a copy of it was brought to England by Augustine.[3] This is all the external evidence producible in support of John's statement; and very scanty and unsatisfactory it appears. On the other hand, we are confronted with an ominous silence on the part of all those writers whose testimony would have been of real importance. Neither in the writings of Gregory himself, nor in those of Gregory of Tours, Isidore of Seville, Bede, or Paul the Deacon, nor yet in the *S. Gallen Life* or in the *Liber Pontificalis*, do we find one word about the alleged Gregorian revision. But if Gregory was in truth the compiler of the Sacramentary, how comes it that every one of these authors omits to mention a circumstance of such importance? We cannot believe that they were all so neglectful as to forget to mention it, or that they all deliberately avoided the subject. How is it, then, that Paul, who wrote a life of Gregory, says nothing? How is it that Bede and the Papal biographer both think it worth while to record a detail such as was Gregory's addition to the prayer "Hanc igitur," and yet breathe not a hint of the great revision? Surely the only tenable explanation of this mysterious

[1] *De Rebus Eccl.* 22 (Migne *P. L.* cxiv.).
[2] *Epp.* 92 (ed. Iaffé).
[3] S. Egbert. *De Instit. Cathol. Dialogus* xvi. §§ 1, 2.

silence is that not one of these writers had heard of Gregory's work on the Sacramentary, that there had been no revision of the Sacramentary by Gregory at all. The assertion of John the Deacon is based upon a mere tradition, which became current apparently in the course of the eighth century, and which was known to Walafrid Strabo. As representing a fact of history, however, this tradition and John's restatement of it appear to be worth absolutely nothing. In the face of the consentient silence of all authorities, we cannot for a moment believe the story.

The external evidence, then, fails entirely to bear out the testimony of the ninth-century biographer. It remains to show that the internal evidence of the Gregorian mass-book is equally conclusive against him. As has been stated above, a copy of the Sacramentary, which tradition ascribed to Gregory, was sent to Charlemagne by Hadrian the First between the years 784 and 791. To this book, shortly after its arrival in Gaul, a supplement was added, which about trebled its bulk, and indeed made it considerably longer than the Gelasianum itself. At first the supplement was kept separate from the original work, a preface being interposed between the two parts; but by degrees portions of the supplement were inserted for convenience into the text, so that by the end of the tenth century the two halves became fused into one whole, which supplies the prayers of the present Roman Missal. Nevertheless, the distinction between the original and additional matter was never quite obliterated, and it is still possible to indicate approximately the scope and contents of the primitive book.

Of this Gregorian Sacramentary Duchesne gives the following account[1]:—"It is an essentially stational sacramentary, to be used only on festivals and days of solemn assembly. It makes no provision for Sundays and ordinary days, still less for private solemnities, such as marriages and funerals; nor again for special necessities such as we find in complete books, namely, masses in time of war, pestilence, tempests, and other visitations, or for the sick, for sinners, for travellers, etc. We do not even find in it the formularies connected with the *velatio virginum* and the reconciliation of penitents. We must therefore be careful not to take the Gregorian Sacramentary for other

[1] Duchesne *Origines* p. 123.

than it is, or to expect of it what it does not contain. It is the Pope's book, and contains the prayers that the Pope had to use at those ceremonies over which he usually presided."

Such being the character of the mass-book, what are we to say of its date? Is it possible that it could have been compiled at the close of the sixth century, and by Gregory? Duchesne has no hesitation in replying in the negative. "It certainly contains a number of prayers which were in use in the time of St. Gregory, and indeed long before him. But the author of the supplements added in France had, even in his day, remarked that St. Gregory could not have mentioned his own festival; and he also notes, as later additions, the masses for the Nativity and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, and those for certain days of Lent. He has further denoted by an obelus whatever he considered to be an interpolation. Indeed, besides the mass of St. Gregory himself, we must reject those for the four festivals of the Blessed Virgin, not only those for her Nativity and Assumption, but even those for the Purification and the Annunciation, and the festival of the Exaltation of the Cross, these holy days not having been introduced into Rome till during the course of the seventh century. With regard to Lent, the stations of the Thursdays are not older than Gregory II. (715–731), whereas the stations of Ash Wednesday and the following days, up to the First Sunday in Lent, are more ancient, but at the same time, still later than St. Gregory. Another addition is evident in the station of January 1, given as "ad St. Mariam ad Martyres," since this church, that is, the Pantheon, was not consecrated for Christian worship until the time of Pope Boniface IV. (608–615). Its dedication is indicated on May 13, so that here again we have a festival posterior to St. Gregory. The same applies to the dedication of St. Nicomede on June 1, this church having been consecrated under Boniface V. (619–625). The Churches of St. Adrian, St. Andrew near the Lateran, St. Lucy, St. George, St. Theodore, and St. Apollinaris, mentioned as stational churches, are the three first of the time of Honorius (625–638), the others probably later. Finally, the festival of Pope St. Leo, indicated on June 28, is the anniversary, not of his death, but of the translation of his relics under Sergius (687–701)." From all this Duchesne draws

the following conclusion: "We should do well to regard the Gregorian Sacramentary as corresponding to the state of the Roman Liturgy at the time of Pope Hadrian. It would be more natural to avoid all ambiguity and to call it the Sacramentary of Hadrian."

It appears, then, that neither the external nor the internal evidence gives any support to the statement made by John, and under these circumstances we are surely justified in dismissing this statement as legendary. I will briefly sum up my conclusions respecting Gregory's liturgical work in the following manner: Without doubt Gregory introduced five reforms in connexion with the Liturgy. They were the chanting of the Alleluia outside of Easter-tide; the addition to the "Hanc igitur"; the insertion of the Pater Noster at the end of the Canon; the prohibition of the wearing of chasubles by subdeacons; and the restriction of singing by deacons to the chanting of the Gospel. Besides these acknowledged changes, Gregory may possibly have been responsible for some other minor alterations, but of this we have no proof. A general revision of the Liturgy, however, and a compilation of a new Sacramentary, was never undertaken or carried out by him. The legend of such a revision did not spring up until more than a century after his death; and the elaborate reproduction of this legend as truthful history is only met with at the close of the ninth century. As for the Gregorianum, it is a "Pope's book" of the time of Hadrian the First.

Closely connected with this question of Gregory's relation to the Gregorian Sacramentary is the equally obscure and difficult question of his relation to Gregorian music. Ecclesiastical tradition, as is well known, ascribes to Gregory three achievements in connexion with the development of Church music. These are—

(1) The compilation of an Antiphonary, or book containing the musical portions of the mass;

(2) the revision and rearrangement of the system of Church music;

(3) the foundation of the famous Roman Schola Cantorum.

It is now generally believed by musical experts that Gregory had nothing whatever to do either with the compilation of the Antiphonary or with the invention or revival of the "cantus

planus." Moreover, it is certain that he was not the founder of the Roman singing-school, although it is not improbable that he interested himself in its endowment and extension. I will say a few words, however, on each of these points in order.

(1) First, as to the Antiphonary. The evidence for the Gregorian compilation is briefly as follows. In the first half of the eighth century, Egbert of York saw in Rome the Antiphonary as well as the Sacramentary attributed to Gregory, and asserts that both books were brought to England by Augustine.[1] In the first half of the ninth century, Walafrid Strabo writes: "Tradition has it that the blessed Gregory, besides reordering the masses and consecrations, did also arrange the music of the Church in practically the same most beautiful form which it still preserves, as moreover is expressly stated in the beginning of the Antiphonary."[2] A little later, about the year 850, Leo the Fourth wrote a letter to rebuke a certain Abbat Honoratus for not appreciating the Gregorian music and liturgy, and in this respect "differing, not only from the Roman See but from almost the whole of the Western Church, and indeed from all who in the Latin tongue offer praise to the Eternal King." Leo adds that Gregory with the greatest pains had invented the chant, that "by artificially modulated sound" he might draw to the Church not only ecclesiastics but also the uncultivated; and the abbat is threatened with excommunication if he persists in neglecting the teaching of Gregory in the matter of music and the liturgy.[3] Lastly, John the biographer informs us that,

[1] S. Egbert. *De Instit. Cathol. Dialogus* xvi. §§ 1, 2.

[2] *De Rebus Eccles.* 22. Cf. c. 25: "Ordinem autem cantilenae diurnis, seu nocturnis horis dicendae beatus Gregorius plenaria creditur ordinatione distribuisse, sicut et supra de Sacramentorum diximus libro; cum multi ante sive post eum orationes, antiphonas vel responsoria composuerunt."

[3] *Mon. Germ. Hist., Epp.* v. p. 603 (Hirsch-Gereuth): "Res una valde incredibilis auribus nostris insonuit; . . . id est cum dulcedinem Gregoriani carminis, cum sua, quam in ecclesia tradicione canendi legendique ordinavit et tradidit, intantum perosam habeatis, ut in omnibus in huiusmodi ratione non tantum ab hac proxima sede, sed et ab omni pene occidentali ecclesia, et prorsus ab omnibus, qui Latinis vocibus laudem aeterno regi conferunt et sonos canoros persolvunt, dissentiatis . . . Qui plane sanctissimus papa Gregorius . . . sonum iam dictum, quem in ecclesia vel ubique canimus, musicis artibus opera plurima ad excitandos vel commovendos intentius humanos fecerit animos, ita, ut non tantum ecclesiasticos sed etiam rudes et duros animos artificiosae modulationis sonitu ad ecclesias convocaret . . . Idcirco sub excommunicationis interpositione praecipimus, ut nequaquam aliter, quam et

following the example of Solomon the Wise, and "on account of the compunction evoked by sweet music," Gregory, with great trouble, compiled an Antiphonary, "a cento of chants," an authentic copy of which was still extant in Rome in his own time.[1]

Now, the above evidence proves that about the middle of the ninth century there existed a uniform body of chant which was in practically universal use throughout the Western Church, and further, that this body of chant, together with the book in which it was contained, was connected by tradition with the name of Gregory the Great. But how far is this tradition susceptible of proof? Is there any evidence, beyond the mere tradition, which will justify John's assertion that the Antiphonary was the work of Gregory?

To this question we can only reply that the weight of evidence makes against the truth of the tradition. For, to begin with, there is not the slightest reference to the Antiphonary in any of Gregory's own writings, nor in his epitaph, nor in the biographies of the monk of Whitby or of Paul the Deacon, nor in the notice in the *Liber Pontificalis*. Isidore and Bede, moreover, who were both of them interested in music, say nothing whatever on the subject in their allusions to Gregory. Again, the decree of 595 relating to the singing deacons, and Gregory's caustic language concerning these professional singers, "who enrage God, while they delight the people with their accents," indicate a certain indifference to music rather than the enthusiasm of a musical expert. And lastly, it has been satisfactorily proved that the so-called Gregorian Antiphonary, while agreeing with the calendar and Liturgy in use at Rome at the beginning of the eighth century, does not correspond at all with that of Gregory's time. In fact, the compilation of the Antiphonary has been ante-dated by more than a hundred years. It undoubtedly belongs, not to the sixth, but to the eighth century; and if the epithet "Gregorian" has any real import at all, it must refer to Gregory the Second (715–731) or, as is more probable,

sanctus papa Gregorius tradidit et nos tenemus, in modulatione et lectione in ecclesiis peragatis, totisque viribus perpetim excolatis et decantetis." This letter is dated by Hirsch-Gereuth, 850–854.

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 6: "Deinde in domo Domini, more sapientissimi Salomonis, propter musicae compunctionem dulcedinis, Antiphonarium centonem cantorum studiosissimus nimis utiliter compilavit."

to Gregory the Third (731–741), who may be supposed to have collected and edited the melodies, many of which themselves can scarcely have been composed before the close of the seventh century. We may, therefore, with confidence abandon the tradition that Gregory the Great had anything to do with the compilation of the Antiphonary. It is as mythical as the later fable that he wrote the work at the dictation of an angel in the Oratory of the Holy Cross in the Lateran.

(2) In the second place, we may ask—Can Gregory be held responsible for any change at all in the system of Church music? So technical a question can only be dealt with properly by those who are by training qualified to speak on matters musical. Among these, however, the latest opinion is that the old ecclesiastical tradition of a rule of four Greek modes imposed upon the Church by St. Ambrose, and of a great revision and introduction of four new modes by Gregory, can no longer with any show of probability be maintained. Thus, for instance, Professor H. E. Wooldridge summarily disposes of the old belief in the following words[1]: "That the hymns composed by St. Ambrose are the earliest specimens of Christian composition known to exist is undoubted, but that they can have constituted an imposed rule, or any part of such a rule, is most improbable, for it is clear that the scales employed in these compositions are nothing more than the scales of the Graeco-Roman citharodi, and that the hymns conform in all respects to the current classical practice; moreover, the story of the Gregorian revision and the adoption of the plagal forms of the supposed original four modes, is now contradicted by the recently discovered fact that the Christian music as exhibited in the Antiphonary continued upon the old classical basis, without any change of importance, certainly until the end of the seventh century, or nearly a hundred years after the time of St. Gregory." If, then, the opinion of authorities like Professor Wooldridge and M. Gevaert may be trusted, the Cantus Gregorianus is not of the age of Gregory, and no new system was introduced or invented by that Pope. The terms "Gregorianus," "Ambrosianus Cantus," probably mean nothing more than the style of singing according to the respective uses of Rome and of Milan.

[1] *Oxford History of Music* vol. i. p. 26.

The Roman cantus was early introduced into France and Germany, but it rapidly became corrupted. John the Deacon, who manifests a very hearty contempt for transmontane singing,[1] tells us that Charlemagne, in consequence, sent two of his clergy to be instructed in Rome, who afterwards, on their return, endeavoured to restore the chant to its original purity. As this measure, however, was found to be insufficient, Pope Hadrian, at a later time, sent two cantors of the Roman Church to complete the work of reform. Their efforts were most successful in the city of Metz, and John informs us that "in proportion as the Roman chant surpassed that of Metz, so the chant of Metz surpassed that of the other schools of the French."[2] In Britain also the Roman style of singing was assiduously cultivated.[3] But the system spread by Putta, James the Deacon, and John the arch-chanter of St. Peter's, though doubtless the system practised at the period in the singing-school at Rome, can have been connected only in name with Pope Gregory the First.

(3) Lastly, Gregory is credited by his biographer with being the founder of the Roman Schola Cantorum. In speaking of the Antiphonarium, or "cento of chants," John says that Gregory, to perpetuate his work, "founded a school of singers, endowed it with some estates, and built for it two habitations, one under the steps of the Basilica of St. Peter the Apostle, the other under the houses of the Lateran Palace." Gregory himself in his intervals of leisure was accustomed to give instruction in this school, and in the ninth century the faithful used to gaze with reverence on certain memorials of his work there—the couch on which he reclined when he led the singing, the whip with which he menaced the choir-boys, and the original Antiphonary that he used. So John.[4] But in this case again we are bound to ask—Are we justified in attaching any importance to his statement? Or have we here once more a ninth-century tradition, to which the inaccurate Deacon has given the colour

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 7: "Alpina siquidem corpora, vocum suarum tonitruis altisone perstrepentia, susceptae modulationis dulcedinem proprie non resultant, quia bibuli gutturis barbara feritas, dum inflexionibus et repercussionibus mitem nititur edere cantilenam, naturali quodam fragore, quasi plaustra per gradus confuse sonantia rigidas voces iactat, sicque audientium animos, quos mulcere debuerat, exasperando magis ac obstrependo conturbat."

[2] *Ibid.* ii. 9, 10.

[3] *Ibid.* ii. 8; Baeda *H. E.* ii. 20; iv. 2, 12, etc.

[4] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 6.

of historical fact? Now, so far as concerns the foundation of the school, John is certainly in error. The Schola Cantorum, or, as it was formerly called, the Orphanotrophium, was in existence long before the time of Gregory, its foundation being variously ascribed to Pope Hilarus and Pope Sylvester. Had, then, Gregory any connexion at all with the institution? Though it is by no means certain, it is just possible that he had. When he prohibited the higher clergy from singing the musical portions of the mass, he may have found it advisable to take some steps to supply a deficiency of singers which might otherwise have been the result of his regulation. In this case, there is no objection to supposing that he provided some additional endowment for the existing choir-school, and perhaps also constructed for it a new residence. Such an hypothesis would, at any rate, explain how the tradition embodied in John originated. It must be remembered, however, that outside of this tradition there is on evidence that Gregory took any interest in the school. I may add that Martene's conjecture,[1] that in Gregory's time the Schola included, besides choir-boys, subdeacons and other inferior ministers, is merely an inference from the decree of 595.

Tradition has not been content to ascribe to Gregory extensive reforms in the liturgy and music of the Church; it has also attributed to him the authorship of certain hymns.[2] Eight of these have been printed by the Benedictines in their edition of Gregory's Works. The most notable of them is the familiar "Blest Creator of the light." The remaining seven are: "Primo dierum omnium"; "Nocte surgentes vigilemus omnes"; "Ecce iam noctis tenuatur umbra"; "Clarum decus ieiunii"; "Audi benigne Conditor"; "Magno salutis gaudio"; and "Rex Christe, Factor omnium." The Gregorian authorship of these compositions, however, cannot be maintained. As M. Gevaert says: "Tout le monde sait que la liturgie locale de Rome n'admettait pas cette catégorie de chants, ni an VI^e^ siècle, ni beaucoup plus tard."[3]

Although Gregory contributed but little to the Liturgy, and

[1] *De Ant. Eccl. Rit. IV.* v. 15.

[2] Schaff describes these hymns as "simple, devout, churchly, elevated in thought and sentiment, yet without poetic fire and vigour." Yet Luther pronounced the "Rex Christe, Factor omnium" "der allerbeste Hymnus."

[3] F. A. Gevaert *Les Origines du Chant Liturgique* p. 18.

nothing at all to the sacred music and poetry of the Roman Church, there is yet one respect in which he greatly influenced the religious life of the city. He used the whole weight of his unrivalled authority to encourage popular veneration for the relics of the saints. This superstition had been steadily on the increase ever since the fourth century, owing partly to the semi-paganism that still so widely prevailed, and partly to the direct encouragement it received from great Church leaders, such as Basil and Chrysostom in the East, and Ambrose and Augustine in the West. In the sixth century the practice of collecting and venerating relics had assumed startling dimensions. In Gaul especially the devotion to them was astonishing, and from the writings of Gregory of Tours alone a long and curious list of these highly esteemed objects might be compiled. Here amongst the rest we find mentioned the holy spear, the crown of thorns which kept miraculously green, the pillar of the scourging,[1] and the seamless coat which was enclosed in a chest in a very secret crypt of a basilica in a place called Galathea.[2] Here also we read of relics of St. Andrew preserved at Neuvy, near Tours[3]; blood of St. Stephen in an altar at Bordeaux; some drops of sea-water which had fallen from the robes of the proto-martyr when he was seen in a vision after succouring a ship in distress[4]; a shoe of the martyr Epipodius[5]; and many others. Moreover, the indefinite multiplication of these relics had been already provided for by a very simple expedient. It was taught and believed that the miraculous powers of the saint might be manifested not only through his actual relics, but also through objects which had been associated therewith, such as dust from his tomb, oil from the lamps which burnt before it, and rags of cloth (*brandea*) which had been placed on the sarcophagus. These objects, as well as the original relics, were deposited in reliquaries (*sanctuaria*) and preserved in churches, either underneath or within the altar; sometimes they were borne in solemn procession[6]; occasionally they were worn by private individuals about their persons.[7] In

[1] Greg. Tur. *Mirac.* i. 7.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 8.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 31.
[4] *Ibid.* i. 34.
[5] Greg. Tur. *De Glor. Confess.* 64.
[6] Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* iii. 29; vi. 27.
[7] Greg. *Dial.* i. 2; Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* viii. 14; *Mirac.* i. 84. Compare

the sixth century they were regarded as necessary for the consecration of churches, and frequently, in the case of old churches which had not been dedicated in this way, the omission was supplied. The belief in the power of relics to work miracles, whether for the succour of those who venerated them or for the punishment of those who treated them disrespectfully, was universal. And this led to their being treated by some as a profitable article of commerce: genuine relics were hawked about for sale, and when the supply failed, spurious ones were unblushingly manufactured.[1]

This cultus, as I have said, Gregory did everything in his power to stimulate. He was eager for the acquisition of relics. It is said that he himself brought to Rome an arm of St. Andrew and the head of St. Luke; certainly he ordered the tunic of St. John to be sent thither from Sicily for deposition under the altar of St. John Lateran.[2] John the Deacon remarks that in his time two vestments lay under this altar, and he identifies the one with the small sleeves as the relic brought by Gregory: the other, he conjectures, was the dalmatic of St. Paschasius.[3] Among other important relics in Rome in Gregory's time were the gridiron of St. Lawrence,[4] a portion of the wood of the Holy Cross,[5] and various relics of St. John the Baptist.[6] A nail from the cross of St. Peter is said to have been sent by Gregory to a recluse named Secundinus. The chains of St. Paul, together with those of St. Peter, were preserved with great veneration, and it is worth noting that the latter are mentioned for the first time in Gregory's

the dictum of Alcuin: "Melius est in corde sanctorum imitari exempla quam in sacculis portare ossa."

[1] Aug. *De Op. Monach.* 36; Greg. iv. 30; Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* ix. 6.

[2] *Epp.* iii. 3. [3] Joh. Diac. *Vita* iii. 57–59. [4] *Epp.* iii. 33.

[5] *Epp.* ix. 228. (For the wood of the true cross in the East, see Theophylact *Hist.* v. 16.)

[6] The Benedictine editors of the Letters cite Ripamontius *Hist. Eccles. Mediol.* lib. viii. pp. 522, 523: "Theodelindae Langobard. reginae Gregorius . . . concessit augustissimas reliquias . . . quas inter visuntur ipsius Baptistae reliquiae, liquidus in ampulla cruor, cineres cremato corpore, et cum dente modicum quid e calvaria . . . sunt demum linteamenta quae martyrum sanguinem ebibere et ossium fragmina . . . haec omnia quo pluris apud omnem posteritatem aestimarentur, ac ne solita reliquiarum adulteria suspecta quis habere posset, accessit ipsius Gregorii manu confectus index harum reliquiarum, in quo Langobardicis litteris exscripta et signata omnia continentur."

correspondence.[1] These chains of the Prince of the Apostles were Gregory's favourite relic, and he was accustomed to send to his friends fragments filed from them enclosed in a cross or a key of St. Peter's sepulchre.[2] Thus in 603 he wrote to his friend Eulogius, who suffered from weak eyes[3]: "I have sent you a little cross, in which is inserted a gift of the chains of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, who love you well. Let this be continually applied to your eyes, for many miracles have been often wrought by this same gift." A key, containing similar filings, was forwarded by Gregory to Theoctista, sister of the Emperor, and to enhance the value of the present, he relates the following story:—A certain Lombard, who found it by chance during the sack of a city, caring nothing for the sacred filings, dared to cut the golden case with his knife. Immediately afterwards he was seized by an evil spirit, and compelled to draw his knife across his throat. The death of the man so terrified his comrades that no one would venture to lift the key from the ground, until a pious Catholic named Mimulf came forward and picked it up. After which King Authari sent it back to Rome, along with another key of gold, and an account of the strange miracle that had been wrought.[4]

By far the most cherished relics in Rome, however, were the bodies of the martyred Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul. It was on these that the Romans prided themselves; it was to worship before these that vast multitudes of pilgrims came from every land to "the threshold of the Apostles." We may imagine, then, Gregory's amazement and indignation, when in 594 he received a letter from the Empress Constantina, requesting him to send to her the head or some other part of the body of St. Paul, to deposit in the new church which she was building, within the precincts of her palace, in honour of that Apostle. Such a request, of course, it was impossible to grant, and Gregory was obliged to refuse point-blank to comply with the Empress's wishes. The letter in which he explains the reasons of his refusal is of the greatest interest, throwing, as it does, a flood of light on the relic-cultus at this time prevalent.[5]

[1] Some curious stories about St. Peter's chains are found in the *Legenda Aurea*, on the Feast of St. Peter ad Vincula.

[2] *Epp.* i. 25, 29, 30; iii. 33, 47; iv. 27, 30; v. 42, 46; vi. 6, 58; vii. 23, 25; viii. 33; ix. 228, 229.

[3] *Ibid.* xiii. 45. [4] *Ibid.* vii. 23. [5] *Ibid.* iv. 30.

"As I should gladly receive from you any orders to which I might render prompt obedience, and so increase your favour towards me, I feel the greater sorrow because you require of me what I cannot and dare not do. The bodies of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul are glorified in their churches by such miracles and awful prodigies, that no one can approach those churches even for prayer without great fear. Indeed, when my predecessor, of blessed memory, wished to change the silver covering which was over the most sacred body of the blessed Apostle Peter,[1] though at a distance of nearly fifteen feet from it, there appeared to him a most alarming portent. Nay, I myself wished to make a similar improvement near the most sacred body of St. Paul the Apostle,[2] and for this purpose it was necessary to make somewhat deep excavations close to his tomb. Here the guardian of the place discovered some bones, which, however, did not touch the tomb; but as he ventured to take them up and move them to another spot, certain portents of evil appeared, and he died suddenly.

"Besides this, my predecessor of holy memory wished also to make some improvements where the body of St. Lawrence the Martyr lay. As no one knew exactly where the venerable body had been placed, they dug in search of it, and in their ignorance they unexpectedly opened his sarcophagus. The monks and sacristans[3] who were working there, and who saw the martyr's body—though they did not for a moment venture to touch it—all died within ten days, so that no one who saw the body of that just man survived.[4]

"I have further to inform my Most Serene Lady that when the Romans give relics of the saints they do not venture to touch any part of the body[5]; but a cloth is enclosed in a box, which is then placed near the saints' most sacred bodies. This is afterwards taken up and deposited in the church which is to be dedicated, and the miracles wrought by it are as great as if

[1] *Lib. Pont. V. Pelagii II.*: "Investivit corpus beati Petri apostoli tabulis argenteis deauratis."

[2] We hear nothing of these improvements in any of the "Lives."

[3] Mansionarii. See below, p. 352; and *Dial.* i. 5; iii. 24, 25.

[4] For the belief that it was dangerous to meddle with the bodies of saints, compare Greg. Tur. *Mirac.* i. 43, 44; and *Gesta Dagoberti* i. 2.

[5] This, in view of the frequent donations of relics, can scarcely be believed. But see Ewald's note *in loc.*

the very bodies of the saints had been brought there. Whence it came to pass that in the time of Pope Leo, of blessed memory, when certain Greeks doubted the efficacy of such relics, the Pontiff, according to the tradition handed down by our ancestors, took a pair of scissors and cut the cloth, and as he cut it blood flowed out.[1] In the regions about Rome, and, indeed, throughout the West, it is considered quite intolerable and sacrilegious for any one even to wish to touch the bodies of the saints; and if he ventures to touch them, it is certain that his temerity will by no means remain unpunished. For this reason we are extremely surprised at the assertion of the Greeks that they are in the habit of moving the bones of saints, and we can scarcely believe it.[2] For certain Greek monks came here two years ago, and in the dead of night dug up some bodies which were lying in a field near the Church of St. Paul: they buried the bones again, intending to carry them off when they left Rome. But

[1] In the eighth century the miracle was told of Gregory himself. The *S. Gallen Life* c. 21 says: "Est et altera vetus quoque relatio viri Dei istius famae, in qua quidam dicuntur e partibus Romam venisse occidentalibus, missi a domino suo ut exinde sibi reliquias sanctorum aliquas adferrent. Quos vir Domini Gregorius gratanter excipiens diebus quibus ibi manserunt indesinenter missas agendo eis sanctas diversorum Dei martyrum reliquias consecravit, sicut illic mos est facere. Atque eas singulis imponendo buxis pannis partim dividens sigillo suo signavit, eosque remeare ad suum fecit dominum. Qui cum reversi in via more humano quiescere quodam coepissent loco, occurrit ei animo qui primus fuit illorum stulte egisse, eo quod non consideravit quid suo domino esset allaturus. Fractis ergo sigillorum inpressionibus, nihil inibi invenit habere, nisi ut viles admodum pannorum sectiones, Sicque ad Dei virum reversi dixerunt; si tales ad dominum suum venissent. plus se morte damnatos quam ulla gratia exceptos. . . . Quod ipse patienter ferens, iterum excepit eosque fecit esse in ecclesia cum populo pariter ad missam. Quem . . . Deum hortatus est deprecari ostendere suorum an verae essent sanctorum reliquiae martyrum quas illis donavit legatis. Cum autem esset oratum ad omnibus, tulit ipse cultellum quem sibi iussit donare et unum e pannis pungendo secavit, ex quo confestim sanguis secto cucurrit. Itaque dixit ad eos: 'nescitis quod in sanctificatione corporis et sanguinis Christi, cum supra sancta eius altaria ei in libamen ob sanctificationem illorum offerebantur reliquiarum, sanguis sanctorum quibus adsignata est semper illos intravit pannos utique tinctos?' Qui cum haec viderunt et audierunt, satis consternati, cum omnibus admirabantur quae viderunt et audierunt." Compare Paul. Diac. *Vita* 24; Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 42.

[2] Had Gregory, then, never heard how Constantine had brought to Constantinople the bodies of SS. Andrew, Luke, and Timothy? (Hieron. *Contra Vigilant.* 5; Procop. *De Aed.* i. 4.) Surely he must have been acquainted with the history of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Byzantium. And what of his own alleged transportation of the relics of SS. Andrew and Luke?

being detected and strictly examined as to their motives in so doing, they confessed that they purposed to carry these bones to Greece as relics of the saints. This instance makes us the more doubtful whether it is really true that the Greeks actually move the bones of the saints.

"With regard to the bodies of the blessed Apostles, what am I to say? seeing that it is well known that at the time of their martyrdom believers came from the East to claim them as the bodies of their fellow-countrymen. The remains were taken as far as the second milestone from the city, and placed in a spot which is called the Catacombs. But when the whole party of these believers assembled and endeavoured to remove them again, they were so terrified by a violent storm of thunder and lightning that they fled, and never dared to renew the attempt. Then the Romans came out of the city, and those who by God's mercy obtained that privilege, took up the bodies of the Apostles and laid them in the place where they now are. Who, then, my Most Serene Lady, knowing all this, can be so rash as to venture —I do not say to touch, but even for an instant to gaze upon their bodies?

"The napkin which you charged me also to send is with the body, and cannot be touched, because we cannot approach the body. But as the pious wishes of my Most Serene Lady ought not to be wholly fruitless, I will, as soon as possible, send you a portion of the chains which the Apostle St. Paul wore on his neck and hands, and by which many miracles are openly wrought among the people—that is, if indeed I can succeed in filing off any particles. For many persons often come and beg for some filings from these chains as a holy relic. The priest stands by with his file, and in some cases a particle is immediately detached from the chains, but in others the file is worked for a long time over the chains, but without the least success."

When we read such a letter as this, we are more than ever impressed with the conviction that already, at the close of the sixth century, the world had passed into the twilight of the early Middle Ages. And this conviction is brought home to us no less forcibly when we come to consider the attitude which Gregory, the most cultivated Roman of his time, saw fit to take up with regard to classic learning and literature. The

consideration of this question will bring this chapter on Gregory's life and work in Rome to a conclusion.

Now, the panegyrical John, inaccurate here as everywhere else, endeavours to exhibit Gregory in the light of a magnanimous patron of the arts and sciences, and he sketches a picture of the Papal court such as might almost have been drawn of that of some humanistic Pontiff of Renaissance. "In Gregory's time," he says, "Wisdom, as it were, visibly built herself a temple in Rome, and the seven arts, like seven columns of most precious stones, supported the vestibule of the Apostolic See. None of those who attended on the Pope, from the least to the greatest, showed the slightest trace of barbarism either in speech or attire, but pure Latinity and the use of the ancient toga and trabea preserved the manner of the life of Latium in the palace of the Latin Pope."[1] In this remarkable description the Papal circle is represented as distinguished by a cultured classical conservatism. The liberal arts—grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, and the rest—are said to have been encouraged, and the old classical models carefully imitated. And in his predilection for choice Latinity, this Pontiff of the sixth century is portrayed as outrivalling his fifteenth-century successors. Such a picture of classical elegance and refinement in an age of almost universal barbarism is too startling to be passed over without more critical examination, and we are bound to inquire whether the outline is correctly drawn, and whether the colouring is true.

Now, Gregory of Tours, who was himself a contemporary of his namesake of Rome, in the preface to his *History*, makes a

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 13, 14: "Tunc rerum Sapientia Romae sibi templum visibiliter quodammodo fabricabat, et septemplicibus artibus, veluti columnis nobilissimorum totidem lapidum, apostolicae sedis atrium fulciebat. Nullus pontifici famulantium, a minimo usque ad maximum, barbarum quodlibet in sermone vel habitu praeferebat, sed togata, quiritum more, seu trabeata Latinitas suum Latium in ipso Latiali palatio singulariter obtinebat. Refloruerant ibi diversarum artium studia, et qui vel sanctimonia vel prudentia forte carebat, suo ipsius iudicio subsistendi coram pontifice fiduciam non habebat. Arcessebantur pontificalibus profundis consiliis prudentes viri, quos perhibui, potius quam potentes; et paupere philosophia intrinsecus quid potius aut potissimum in unoquoque negotio sequendum putaretur artificiosis argumentationibus rationabiliter inquirente, dives inertia, quae modo se de sapientibus pari sorte ulciscitur, prae cubiculi foribus despicabilis remanebat."

very melancholy statement about the culture of his time. "The cultivation of letters," he says, "is disappearing or rather perishing in the cities of Gaul. Not a single grammarian skilled in dialectics can be found to describe the general course of events, whether in prose or in verse. Whereat many often lament, saying, 'Alas for our age! for the study of literature has perished among us, and the man is no longer to be found who can commit to writing the events of the time!'"[1] This lament, the truth of which is abundantly illustrated by the prose of Gregory himself, as well as by the doggerel of Fortunatus, the poet of the period, applies no doubt in the first instance to the state of culture in Gaul. There are, however, sufficient indications that it might have been uttered with equal truth over the decay of learning in Rome; and from the writings of Pope Gregory himself we learn several details which go to show that the study of letters in the Eternal City had reached the lowest ebb. We gather, for instance, that of all the sciences, that of medicine alone flourished.[2] Of the other arts we hear nothing. The old schools of grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, and jurisprudence, which had formerly been endowed by the State, were in all probability broken up. Gregory, at least, says not a word about them, nor in his letters do we get a single mention of any Roman professor or man of learning. That classical literature was any longer studied seems unlikely. Gregory himself had been the foremost scholar of his time, yet while even his namesake of Tours shows some acquaintance with Virgil, Pliny, Sallust, and Aulus Gellius, and while even Fortunatus sometimes echoes the Roman poets, the writings of the Pope show scarcely a trace of any knowledge of the ancient authors. Hardly any one in Rome could speak or write in the Greek language.[3] The few interpreters that were found, besides being untrustworthy, were so bad at their work that they made sheer nonsense of the documents which they tried to render

[1] Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* Praef.

[2] At any rate, when Marinianus bishop of Ravenna, fell ill, Gregory took the trouble to send him some prescriptions of Roman doctors, urging him at the same time to come to Rome for treatment (Greg. *Epp.* xi. 21).

[3] Even Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 14, admits, "Sola deerat interpretandi bilinguis peritia, et facundissima virgo Cecropia, quae quondam suae mentis acumina, Varrone caelibatum suum auferente, Latinis tradiderat, imposturarum sibi praestigia, sicut ipse in suis epistolis queritur, vindicabat."

into Latin.[1] The great classical libraries seem to have been either closed or destroyed. The scanty collections which were being gradually formed in the Lateran and some of the churches were miserably defective even in works connected with theology. For instance, not a single copy of the writings of St. Irenaeus,[2] or of the acts and canons of the Second General Council of Constantinople,[3] was to be found in Rome. Even the *Acts of the Saints* were not discoverable in the libraries of the Church. Hence, when Eulogius of Alexandria requested Gregory to send him a copy of *The Acts of all the Martyrs*, compiled by Eusebius, Gregory replied that he had never heard of the work. "For besides what is contained about the acts of the holy martyrs in the books of the same Eusebius, I am not aware of any collections in the archives of the Roman Church, or in the libraries of the city, unless it be a small collection contained in a single volume. We have, indeed, the names of almost all the martyrs, with their passions assigned to particular days, collected in one volume, and on each of these days we celebrate mass in their honour. Yet the volume does not say who each martyr was, or how he suffered; only the name together with the place and day of martyrdom is recorded."[4]

To represent this stagnant, already mediaeval city as a temple of wisdom and palace of the arts is obviously ridiculous.[5] If Gregory's Letters tell us anything at all, they show us plainly that classicism in Rome was utterly extinguished; that literature, art, and culture were dead and buried; that the only liberal study which survived was that which concerned the development of the doctrine and traditions of the Church. That

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 28; vii. 27; x. 14, 21. For a case of forgery, see *Epp.* xi. 55.

[2] *Ibid.* xi. 40.

[3] *Ibid.* vii. 31.

[4] *Ibid.* viii. 28. So Pope Gelasius forbade the legends of saints to be read in churches, because they were so seldom authentic. On the bearing of Gregory's letter on the question of the origin of the Roman Martyrology, see the *Benedictine Life* iii. 12, §§ 7, 8.

[5] Baronius ad an. 680 gives two letters, one from Pope Agatho to the Emperors at Constantinople, the other from bishops assembled in Council at Rome, both of which speak of the utter decay of culture in Rome, by reason of the constant warfare with the barbarians. We have every reason to think that a similar cause produced a similar effect in Gregory's time. In none of Gregory's letters is there any mention of any professor or of any school of learning.

Gregory himself, moreover, was perfectly content with this state of affairs, that he neither wished nor attempted to recall the ancient classical culture, may be shown without difficulty from his recorded sentiments and even from the admissions of his laudatory biographer.

Those who endeavour to defend Gregory as a friend to secular learning, rely for their proof mainly on a passage in the Commentary on the First of Kings, attributed to his pen. The author of the paragraph writes as follows:[1] "Although the learning to be obtained from secular books is not directly beneficial to the saints in their spiritual conflict, yet, when it is united to the study of Holy Scripture, men attain to a profounder knowledge of Scripture itself. The liberal arts ought, therefore, to be cultivated, in order that we may gain through them a more accurate knowledge of God's Word. But the evil spirits expel the desire for learning from the hearts of some, to the intent that, being destitute of secular knowledge, they may be unable to reach the loftier heights of spiritual knowledge. For the devils know well that by acquaintance with secular literature we are helped in sacred knowledge." The author goes on to show how that Moses, Isaiah, and St. Paul were gifted with spiritual perception in a pre-eminent degree, because they had laid a sound foundation in a good secular education. And he concludes: "If we are ignorant of profane science, we are unable to penetrate the depth of the Sacred Word." Now, if it could be shown that the author of this extract was Gregory himself, we could not avoid the conclusion that the Pope approved of a secular education, provided that it was strictly subordinated to the study of theology. Unfortunately, however, the Commentary on Kings is the work, certainly not of Gregory, but either of Claudius, who is known to have misrepresented Gregory's sentiments, or else, as is more probable, of some later writer unknown.[2] The extract accordingly proves nothing whatsoever. And if we wish to discover Gregory's opinion of the liberal arts, we must seek for it only in such of his writings as are genuine beyond dispute.

To begin with, then, we get, as it were, a side-light on Gregory's sentiments, in the introduction to his *Life of St.*

[1] *Exp. in Primum Reg.* v. cap. iii. § 30.

[2] See above, pp. 191, 192 *n.*

Benedict. Here, after relating how that saint was sent to Rome to acquire a liberal education, Gregory continues thus: "But when he saw that many of the students rushed headlong into vice, he withdrew from the world he had just entered, lest, in acquiring worldly knowledge, he might also fall down the same terrific precipice. Despising, therefore, the study of letters, he desired only to please God by a holy life. Accordingly, he departed from Rome, skilfully ignorant and wisely unlearned." [1] The concluding sentence certainly does not prove that Gregory discountenanced secular studies, but it could scarcely have been uttered by one who was enthusiastic in their defence, nor even by one who (like the pseudo-Gregory just quoted) taught publicly that disinclination for learning was a temptation of the devil. If, however, there still remains a doubt as to his mind on this question, the famous letter to Desiderius bishop of Vienne, ought to set it at rest.

This Desiderius was one of the few men of culture left in Gaul, and one, moreover, who took a keen and practical interest in the promotion of education. He even ventured to give lectures himself on grammar and to read the poets to the young men of his cathedral town. The report of these doings came at length to Rome, filling Gregory with amazement and even horror. "A report has reached me," he wrote to Desiderius,[2] "a report which I cannot mention without a blush, that you are lecturing on profane literature to certain friends; whereat I am filled with such grief and vehement disgust that my former opinion of you has been turned to mourning and sorrow. For the same mouth cannot sing the praises of Jupiter and the praises of Christ. Consider yourself how offensive, how abominable a thing it is for a bishop to recite verses which are unfit to be recited even by a religious layman. . . . If, hereafter, it shall be clearly established that the information I received was false, and that you are not applying yourself to the idle vanities of secular literature, I shall render thanks to God, who has not allowed your heart to be polluted by the blasphemous praises of unspeakable men."

[1] Greg. *Dial.* ii. Proleg.: "Scienter nescius et sapienter indoctus." Cf. *Reg. Past.* iii. 6: "Cum illis (sc. sapientibus) laborandum est, ut sapientius, stulti fiant, stultam sapientiam deserant, et sapientem Dei stultitiam discant." This last however is defensible as an application of 1 Cor. i.

[2] Greg. *Epp.* xi. 34.

It is impossible to explain away language such as this. Even John the Deacon, who did his best to make Gregory appear the most enlightened of Popes, was forced to recognize that the sentiments here expressed were unfavourable to secular studies. Indeed, he even tells us that "Gregory forbade all bishops to read pagan literature" [1]—a statement, it is true, which is probably only an inaccurate inference from the letter to Desiderius, but which, nevertheless, correctly indicates the direction in which Gregory's influence was exerted. In the opinion of the greatest of the Popes it was unseemly even for laymen to devote themselves to the humane sciences; for bishops to do so was a grave scandal. From this conclusion there seems to be no escape.

In Gregory's defence, however, there are, perhaps, a few considerations which should in fairness be brought forward. In the first place—if this, indeed, is any excuse—his language may be paralleled from the writings of other men of letters, both in his own time and later. Thus Gregory of Tours, when referring to Jerome's punishment for reading Cicero and Virgil, writes: "We ought therefore to write and speak only such things as may edify the Church of God, and with a holy instruction may render fruitful in the knowledge of the perfect faith minds which have hitherto been uncultivated. We must not record deceitful fables, we must not follow a philosophy which is at enmity with God, lest by the judgment of God we fall into the condemnation of eternal death." [2] Alcuin, again, in the eighth century, is reported to have said to his pupils: "The sacred poets are sufficient for you, and there is no reason why you should be polluted with the impure eloquence of Virgil." [3] And Lanefranc, who led the revival of learning in the eleventh century, wrote in answer to a friend: "You have sent me for solution some questions on secular literature, but it is unbecoming for a bishop to be occupied with such studies. Formerly I spent the days of my youth in these things, but when I undertook the pastoral office I determined to renounce them." [4] If

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* iii. 33: "Omnes omnino pontifices a lectione librorum gentilium Gregorius inhibebat."

[2] Greg. Tur. *Mirac.* Prooem.

[3] Mabillon *AA. SS. Ord. S. Bened.* v. p. 156.

[4] *Ibid.* saec. iii. Part I. Praef. iv. § 42, p. xxvii.

Gregory thought wrongly, we must at least admit that he did so in good company.

Again, Gregory's attitude is largely accounted for by his conviction that the end of the world was close at hand.[1] "As firmly as the octogenarian believes that his life is drawing to its close, so firmly did Gregory believe that the world was near its end." The desolation of Italy by the Lombards, the ravages of the terrible *lues inguinaria*, the convulsions of nature, the disorganization of society,—all seemed to him to be but prognostications of the approach of the final crisis. The future had dwindled to a span. What folly, then, to spend the precious moments in poring over the literature of a dissolute paganism! What madness to linger in the thought of the classic past, when the footstep of the avenger was even now sounding at the gates! Prayer and penitence and study of the Scriptures seemed to Gregory to be the only fitting occupation for leisured Christians in these last days.

Again, it is not unlikely that Gregory had good reason for believing that the old literature exercised an unhealthy influence on the minds of sixth-century students.[2] It was scarcely possible for a scholar of this time to study the classics in the modern spirit of detachment, admiring their literary qualities, without being affected by the sentiments which they expressed. And there was doubtless a real danger that these pagan sentiments, clothed in such perfect literary form, might take root in the minds of susceptible Christian readers. If, then, a philosopher like Plato could banish from his ideal Republic even the masterpieces of Greek poetry, we can scarcely blame a Christian moralist for discountenancing the study of such authors as Horace, Ovid, and Martial. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that, even in the sixth century, paganism was hardly dead. In many of the country districts the old deities were still worshipped; and even where this was not the case, men nevertheless regarded them, not yet as myths, as mere creations of the poetic imagination, but as real existences, as demons, spirits of evil, who were still capable of perverting

[1] For Gregory's belief, see *Dial.* v. 41; *Hom. in Ev.* i. 3; iv. 2; *Epp.* iii. 29, 61; iv. 23, 44; v. 44; vii. 26; ix. 156, 232; xi. 37.

[2] The influence of pagan literature on the imagination is strikingly expressed by Cassian. *Collat.* xiv. 12. See the commentary of Gazaeus, *in loc.*

those who in any way paid them homage. If this belief be taken into account, we shall no longer find much difficulty in comprehending the tone of Gregory's letter to Desiderius. It was, indeed, scarcely proper that a bishop should preach God in his cathedral, and recite poems in praise of demons in his lecture-room. "The same mouth cannot sing the praises of Jupiter and the praises of Christ."

It seems, then, that while we cannot acquit Gregory of the charge of being hostile to secular learning, there are yet reasons which may lead us to mitigate our condemnation. At any rate, his hostility was not inspired by mere barbarous dislike of knowledge as such. For theological learning at least he had a profound respect. "In the priest's vestments," he writes,[1] "gold is prominent, to show that he ought to shine forth conspicuously in understanding and wisdom." "We ought by reading to acquire within ourselves a measure of God's Spirit, which, if need arise, we may hereafter manifest by suffering."[2] In more than one of his letters he impresses on his clergy the duty of studying the Scriptures and the Fathers, and his ecclesiastical appointments were often determined by the qualifications of the candidates in this regard. His own theological attainments were considerable. His knowledge of Scripture was profound, as also was his knowledge of the writings of Augustine. He unsparingly devoted time and thought to the exposition and development of dogma, and he "contributed more than any one person that can be named to fix the form and tone of mediaeval religious thought." Nevertheless, in consequence of his repudiation of classical literature, Gregory came to be regarded comparatively early as the very type of a Vandal and a Goth. Thus in the twelfth century John of Salisbury declares that "this most holy doctor Gregory, who watered and inebriated the whole Church with the honied showers of his preaching," not only banished from his court the study of astrology (*mathesin*), but also, "according to the tradition handed down by our ancestors," committed to the flames the contents of the libraries on the Palatine and the

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 24.

[2] *Ibid.* ii. 50. Compare *Mor.* i. 45: "Nulla est scientia, si utilitatem pietatis non habet, quia dum bona cognita exsequi negligit, sese ad iudicium arctius stringit. Et valde inutilis est pietas, si scientiae discretione caret, quia dum nulla hanc scientia illuminat, quomodo misereatur ignorat."

Capitol, in order to ensure the exclusive study of the Scriptures.[1] A yet later tradition adds that the Pope showed special animosity against the works of Cicero and Livy, causing all copies he could get hold of to be burnt or suppressed. These stories, however, we may confidently reject. Gregory, it is true, was no lover of classical literature; but there is no evidence that he desired to suppress it altogether. And even had he possessed the wish to do so, he would scarcely have had the power. The libraries were not the property of the Pope, but of the Emperor, and we cannot believe that the latter would have sanctioned their destruction. Moreover, had Gregory really distinguished himself by such an act of vandalism, it is scarcely possible that even so unblushing a panegyrist as John the Deacon could have held him up to admiration as a patron of the humanities. It appears, therefore, that the libellous tradition became current some time after the ninth century, but, whether early or late, it is almost certainly without foundation.

Similar arguments may be advanced against another legend put into circulation by an ignorant Dominican friar of Orvieto in the fourteenth century,[2] to the effect that Gregory mutilated the statues of Rome. It was also said that he destroyed ancient buildings. Platina, in the fifteenth century, repeats these charges, but unhesitatingly rejects them[3]: "We ought not to suffer Gregory to be censured by a few ignorant men, as if the ancient stately buildings were demolished by his order, upon this pretence which they make for him, lest strangers coming out of devotion to Rome should less regard the consecrated places and spend all their gaze upon triumphal arches and monuments of antiquity. No reproach can justly be fastened on this great Bishop, especially considering that he was a native of the city, and one to whom, next after God, his country was most dear, even above his life." Again, respecting the statues, he says: "Some tell us that (Pope) Sabinian was, at the instigation of some Romans, thus highly incensed against Gregory, because he had mutilated and thrown down the statues of the ancients which had been set up throughout the city; but this is a charge as dissonant from truth as that of his demolishing

[1] Joh. Salisb. *Polycrat.* ii. 26; viii. 19.
[2] Leonis Urbevetani *Chronicon.*
[3] See Platina *Lives of Gregory and Sabinian.*

the old fabrics, concerning which we have spoken in his Life: and considering the antiquity of these statues, and the casualties which might befall them, and the designs which men's covetousness or animosity might have upon them, it is fairly probable that they might be mangled or lost, without Gregory's being at all concerned therein." With the opinion of this fifteenth-century biographer, the judgment of modern historians is in complete accord.

In conclusion, it remains to show how far Gregory's contempt for secular culture and literature is reflected in the style and composition of his own writings.

Now, in the dedicatory letter prefixed to the *Magna Moralia* there occurs a celebrated passage which has a bearing on this question.[1] "In looking through this work," he writes, "do not expect to find the foliage of eloquence, for by the sacred Oracles commentators are expressly debarred from the frivolity of barren wordiness, in that it is forbidden to plant a grove in the temple of God. Besides, we all know that whenever the stalks of corn are too luxuriant in leaves, the ears are deficient in grain. It is for this reason that I have disdained to observe the rules of composition which the teachers of secular learning recommend. As this very letter shows, I do not attempt to avoid the collision of words called 'metacism,'[2] or the obscurity of barbarians. I do not care to observe the position, force, or government of prepositions, for I think it absolutely intolerable to fetter the words of the Divine Oracle by the rules of Donatus. Nor have these rules been observed by the translators of any authorized version of the Holy Scriptures."

After such an exordium we should naturally expect to find that Gregory's prose style was scarcely more cultivated than that of his namesake of Tours. The latter writer was also very sensible of his literary deficiencies. "I ask pardon of my readers," he writes, "if I shall have violated in letters or in syllables the rules of grammar, with which I am not thoroughly acquainted."[3] And again, "I ask the indulgence of my readers, for I have not been trained in the study of grammar or

[1] Greg. *Epp.* v. 53*a*, § 5.

[2] Metacism is either the collision of *ms*, or the letter *m* at the end of a word followed by a vowel at the beginning of the next. See Du Cange *in voc.*

[3] Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* Proleg.

instructed in the polite literature of secular authors."[1] In the case of this Bishop of Tours there is certainly good reason for such apology. His Latinity is exceedingly corrupt. As he so frankly confesses, he is constantly transgressing the rules of grammar, both with regard to the genders of words and the use of prepositions. The accusative absolute is frequently used for the ablative; the force of particular conjunctions is often lost or changed from the classical use. He is unsound on his moods and tenses. His style is utterly unpolished, rough, and often obscure. And his narrative of events is extremely confused and ill-arranged.

Those who look to find similar grammatical chaos in the writings of the Roman Gregory will be agreeably disappointed. His style, it is true, has been affected by the prevailing barbarism. He modelled himself on Augustine, but he was no less inferior to Augustine than his contemporary Fortunatus was to Ausonius. The construction of his sentences is often clumsy and involved. The natural order of words is frequently tampered with, certainly without any advantage in euphony or force. The words themselves are sometimes unclassical, or used in an unclassical sense or with unclassical constructions But in admitting all this we have said the worst that can be said. Gregory's style is simple and unartificial, but still idiomatic and generally grammatical. He expresses his meaning with clearness and point. Often his language is dignified and impressive; sometimes, in moments of passion or excitement, it rises even to eloquence. Sound sense and good feeling are the characteristics of his writings. His allusion to the rules of Donatus, then, must not be interpreted quite literally. It represents nothing more than a general protest against that pedantic grammatical criticism which was affected by the "philosophizing rhetoricians" of the Gallic schools. And we may indeed be thankful that Gregory was content to forego the parade of learning for the sake of explaining his views in a style and language which practical men could understand and appreciate.

Gregory's letters, more than eight hundred in number, are of inestimable value for the history of this period. In them we find contemporary life portrayed with lucidity and faithfulness.

[1] Greg. Tur. *Vitae Patr.* ii.; cf. *De Glor. Confess.* Praef.; *Mirac.* ii. 4.

Standing, as he did, a central figure of this sixth-century world, Gregory in his correspondence sympathetically reproduces every phase of its life and thought, drawing, as it were, line upon line, an inimitable picture of the age in which he lived. In this respect the very simplicity of his style is of the greatest advantage. The *préciosité* of Sidonius, the involved turgidity of Ennodius, the cumbersome pedantry of Cassiodorus, have marred the letters composed by these authors, and to some extent lessened their value. But no such defects interrupt our pleasure in reading the correspondence of Gregory. He makes no attempt at fine writing or at display of learning. But in plain and perspicuous language he explains his views and wishes, and gives an account of the events of his time. From beginning to end of the fourteen books of the *Epistolae* we cannot fail to recognize the hand, not certainly of a literary master, but of a well-educated man who could think and observe, and moreover could clothe his thoughts and observations in vigorous and appropriate language. There are few post-classical compositions which attain to a higher pitch of excellence.

In this chapter I have endeavoured to give some account of Gregory's life and work in Rome, particularly with reference to such matters as intimately concerned the Roman people and the Roman Church. It must not be forgotten, however, that Rome was the head-quarters of all Gregory's activity. After he became Pope he seems never to have left the city. Winter and summer, in cold and in heat, he remained in the Lateran, frequently prostrate with illness, but always at work upon the overwhelming mass of business which demanded his attention. How he conducted this business, what was his policy and ideal, what impression he made on the greater world outside the city walls, it will be the object of the following chapters to explain.

CHAPTER III

THE PATRIMONY OF ST. PETER. THE *DIALOGUES*

One of the most surprising of Gregory's qualities is his remarkable power of absorbing himself in the most divergent interests and concerns, and of acting at the same time different parts, which in a single individual seem usually to be incompatible. His character, simple though it is in some respects, is nevertheless many-sided, and he puts forth his energies in many diverse directions. Indeed, the facility with which he passes from one sphere of activity into another quite opposite one is sometimes positively bewildering. He appears before us now as a simple-hearted priest, again as an accomplished courtier, again as a military expert, again as an eloquent preacher of penitence, again as a lawyer of singular acumen. At one moment he is the ardent patriot, scheming, planning, treating with kings and Emperors, shaping affairs with the skill and judgment of a veteran politician; the next he is metamorphosed into the shy recluse, engrossed in tracing out the mystic meanings which lurk beneath the text of Scripture. Now he appears as the shrewd man of business, the practical man with a knowledge of finance and a talent for the management of estates, a man whom neither dishonest agents nor plausible tenants can take in or deceive; again we see in him the superstitious monk, the collector of relics, the devout compiler of the legends of Italian saints, the firm believer in miracles and portents and diabolic apparitions. The combination in this one man of such diverse and even contradictory qualities is not a little remarkable; and it is in order to emphasize and illustrate the peculiarity that I propose to deal in the present chapter with two such disconnected

subjects as the Patrimony and the *Dialogues*. We shall thus have an opportunity of contrasting two sides of Gregory's character. First, we shall see him as the landlord and manager of the vast estates of the Papacy; and afterwards we shall see him in the part of a credulous compiler of miracle-tales and legends. The combination is interesting, and eminently characteristic both of the man and of the age in which he lived.

(1) *The Patrimony of St. Peter.*

In the time of Gregory's pontificate the revenues of the Roman Church were very considerable. They were derived through various channels, partly from Imperial grants, partly from legacies, partly from occasional sources (such as the property accumulated by bishops during their episcopate, the property of freedmen of the Church who died childless, ecclesiastical fines and the like), and partly from lands presented to the Church at various periods by the faithful. The recent disturbances in Italy had, on the whole, been beneficial to the Church, since many wealthy Italians had been driven away to the East or into monasteries, and in many cases the Church had inherited their estates. Hence about the year 600 the domains of the Fisherman had swelled to great dimensions. An Italian estimate puts the landed property of the Roman See at 1360 square miles, and the revenue derived therefrom at £120,000 in money and £300,000 in kind. A German calculation gives the land as 1800 square miles, and the revenue as about £300,000 a year. But however this may be—and it is impossible to prove the accuracy of such computations—it is at least quite certain that at the beginning of the seventh century the Roman Church owned many hundreds of square miles of land, and drew an annual revenue amounting to hundreds of thousands of pounds.

The estates of the Church were scattered over several districts, and went by the name of Patrimonies. Thus we hear of patrimonies in Campania, Sicily, Africa, and elsewhere. Each local patrimony was composed of large tracts of land lying in the district, which were called Massae; and each massa in turn consisted of an aggregation of allotments, termed Fundi. Thus a number of fundi constituted a massa, and

several massae formed a patrimony, and the whole body of the patrimonies together was known as the Patrimony of St. Peter.

For convenience of enumeration, the patrimonial estates may be distinguished into three groups—the Italian patrimonies; those in the islands of Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica; and the extra-Italian patrimonies in Dalmatia, Gaul, and Africa.

(*a*) The Italian patrimonies. In the north the Roman Church owned lands in the neighbourhood of Ravenna,[1] together with some trifling possessions in Liguria.[2] Formerly she had also possessed territory in the Cottian Alps, but this had been lost at the time of the Lombard invasion.[3] In Central Italy there were estates in the province of Samnium,[4] and in the old Sabine country near Norcia,[5] and in the region of Tivoli.[6] In Rome itself the Pope was landlord of extensive house and garden property, which, even in the seventh century, must have been valuable.[7] The district between the Via Appia and the sea, as far as the Via Latina, which went by the name of the Patrimonium Appiae,[8] and a tract on the right bank of the Tiber, called the Patrimonium Tusciae,[9] also belonged to the Roman Church. These estates in the neighbourhood of Rome were mostly cultivated as olive plantations, and we have already noticed how a portion of the Patrimonium Appiae—the massa called Aquae Salviae—was granted by Gregory to the Basilica of St. Paul to maintain the lights.[10] In Latium, again, there was some territory near Minturnae.[11] But the most important of the Italian patrimonies was undoubtedly that of Campania, where the Roman Church had large possessions in the neighbourhood of Naples. A letter of Gregory's to the troops in Naples has even led to the conjecture that this town itself belonged to the Campanian Patrimony; but this is most improbable.[12] It seems, however, that the little islands

[1] Greg. *Epp.* v. 25. [2] *Ibid.* xi. 6.
[3] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* vi. 28; *Lib. Pont. Vita Johannis VII.*
[4] Greg. *Epp.* ix. 43, 194. [5] *Ibid.* xiii. 38. [6] *Ibid.* iii. 21.
[7] *Ibid.* ii. 10; iii. 17. [8] *Ibid.* xiv. 14. [9] *Ibid.* ix. 96.
[10] *Ibid.* xiv. 14. Cf. the inscr. ap. Migne *P. L.* lxxv. p. 482.
[11] Greg. *Epp.* ix. 87.
[12] *Ibid.* ii. 34. That Naples itself did not belong to the Patrimony may be concluded from the following considerations: (1) Gregory's letter was written to the soldiers, not to the people of Naples. (2) Gregory appeals to their loyalty to the State, but says nothing about the Church. (3) In no other letter does Gregory hint at any claim of his Church to own Naples. It

off the coast—the Isole di Ponza—were owned by the Roman Church; and if, as we have reason to believe, one or more of them contained lead-mines, they must have been a valuable asset.[1] Finally, in the south, the Church possessed estates in the richly wooded country of Lucania and Bruttii. Hence wood was shipped off to Alexandria as a present to the Patriarch Eulogius,[2] and more was ordered to be sent to Rome for the repair of the Basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul.[3] In the heel of Italy, again, there were extensive possessions, particularly in the neighbourhood of Otranto and Gallipoli.[4] Of these, however, we know little.

(*b*) Of the Apostolic patrimonies in the islands, that of Sicily was by far the most valuable and important. It was divided into two large domains—one in the neighbourhood of Syracuse, and the other close to Palermo—which were sometimes united under the management of a single rector, sometimes entrusted each to a separate official. The soil was exceptionally rich and fertile, and from it came the corn which filled the granaries of the Roman Church and kept the Roman people from starvation. St. Peter, it should be remarked, was not the only saint who owned estates in the land of Demeter: St. Ambrose and St. Apollinaris also had their share.[5] But the lands belonging to the Churches of Milan and Ravenna were not to be compared in size or value with those belonging to the Church of Rome.

(*c*) Besides estates in Italy and the islands, the Roman Church possessed "a tiny little patrimony" in Dalmatia,[6] and some small domains in Gaul,[7] in the territories of Marseilles and Arles. The largest patrimony of this group lay in Africa—in Germanicia, a region in the neighbourhood of Hippo. Here the estates were in a flourishing condition, thanks greatly to the friendly interest taken in them by the Government officials. Gennadius the Exarch of Africa, among other services, restored to cultivation large tracts of waste Church land, by settling on

has been suggested that the Etrurian town of Nepi also belonged to the Patrimony, because Gregory ordered the people to obey Leontius, to whom "curam sollicitudinemque civitatis iniunximus" (*ibid.* ii. 14). But here again no shadow of proof can be alleged in favour of the suggestion.

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 40. [2] *Ibid.* vi. 58. [3] *Ibid.* ix. 124–127.
[4] *Ibid.* ix. 200, 205, 206.
[5] *Ibid.* i. 80; xi. 6, 8. [6] *Ibid.* ii. 23.
[7] *Ibid.* vi. 5, "patrimoniolum"; cf. iii. 23; v. 31; vi. 5, 6, 10, 51, 53; xi. 43.

them numbers of captives whom he had taken in his wars on the Roman frontier; Innocent the Prefect of Africa likewise showed himself friendly; and Gregory wrote to thank them both for their zeal in "feeding the flock of the blessed Apostle Peter."[1] These three patrimonies seem to have been the only ones outside of Italy and the islands. In Spain and in the East the Roman Church at this time appears to have owned no possessions.

This vast property was not all of it cultivated directly by the Church. Portions of it were leased by a contract called emphyteusis, by which the beneficial ownership of the property was transferred to another in consideration of a fixed rent. The term of such leases was usually for the life of one tenant and two specified heirs; though occasionally, when the property was worthless and incapable of improvement, the lease was granted in perpetuity. Gregory tells us that many people came to Rome desiring to secure leases of estates and islands belonging to the Church; but they were only granted under severe restrictions, and when such grant was clearly for the benefit of the Church.[2] To the Imperial recruiting officers (*scribones*), on account of their bad reputation, such leases were invariably refused.[3]

The greater part of the Patrimony, however, was cultivated in the direct interests of the Church and by her own agents. The general supervision devolved upon the Pope, and the management of the separate patrimonies in Sicily, Campania, and elsewhere was confided to officials who were appointed by him and could be removed at his pleasure. A closer examination of the organization of the patrimonies will show how great was the responsibility which rested upon the Papal landlord, and how unceasing and severe was the tax imposed thereby on his time and patience.

The management of each patrimony was carried on through agents of various grades of rank and distinct duties and functions. The supreme government of each was committed to an official specially commissioned for the purpose, who bore the title of Rector of the Patrimony. Such, for instance, was the famous Peter the Subdeacon, of Sicily, to whom many of

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 73; x. 16.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 70; cf. ix. 125.
[3] *Ibid.* ix. 78.

Gregory's letters were addressed, and who held the most important post in the most important patrimony of the Roman Church. But sometimes the management of a patrimony or of part of a patrimony was entrusted to an agent called Defensor of the Church, who either acted as rector independently or managed certain districts under a rector's supervision. These agents, both rectors and defensors, had usually been laymen before the time of Gregory; afterwards, however, though laymen were still in rare instances employed,[1] the posts were generally given to ecclesiastics.[2] In the smaller and more distant patrimonies, resident bishops sometimes undertook the administration of the estates[3]; but in the greater patrimonies an ecclesiastical overseer—often a deacon or subdeacon—was sent direct from Rome.[4] These officials were regularly invested with their office "before the most sacred body of St. Peter," where they took an oath to maintain the interests of the Church, to protect the poor and oppressed, and to carry out with fidelity the directions of the Pope.[5] They then received letters of appointment under the Pope's own hand, of which the following is an example[6]:—"With a view to promoting the interests of the Church, we have determined to appoint you to the office of Defensor of the Church, provided that you are free from all official and servile obligations, and that you have not held office in any other Church, and that your appointment is in no way contrary to the canons. Whatever commands you receive from us for the benefit of the poor, you must carry out justly and vigorously. You are to use this privilege which after due deliberation we have conferred upon you, so as to show your zeal by faithfully performing whatever work we may give you to do, knowing that you will have to give an account of all your actions at the judgment-seat of God." A formal notification of the appointment was also sent to the tenants of the estates concerned, and also usually to the bishops, officials, and prominent people of the neighbourhood. One specimen-letter to the coloni of the Syracusan Patrimony is

[1] *E.g.* Dynamius and Arigius undertook the care of the estates in Gaul. They were not, however, defensors in a strict sense.

[2] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 15; cf. Greg. *Epp.* ix. 204.

[3] *E.g.* Licerius bishop of Arles, and Malchus in Dalmatia.

[4] A somewhat inaccurate list of officials is given by Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 53.

[5] Greg. *Epp.* i. 70; ix. 22.

[6] *Ibid.* v. 26; cf. ix. 97.

worth quoting, as indicating the extent of the administrative powers of the Roman agent.[1] "We would have you know that we have thought fit to place you under the care of our defensor. We therefore charge you to yield an ungrudging obedience to such commands as he shall see fit to give you for promoting the interests of the Church. If any attempt to be disobedient or contumacious, we have given him the power of punishing them severely. We have also directed him to recover for the property of the Church, carefully, vigorously, and promptly, all runaway slaves and all land which has been unjustly occupied by any one. We further inform you that he has been charged upon his peril not to venture, on any pretext whatsoever, to seize unjustly or by force the property of others." The agents were compelled to keep strict accounts of all payments and receipts (*libri rationum*), which were brought or sent to Rome for inspection at the end of each indiction. When these accounts proved unsatisfactory, the stewards themselves were sometimes summoned in person to explain matters.[2]

Besides managing the estates, dispensing charity,[3] and protecting the poor and oppressed,[4] the Papal rectors and defensors were often charged by Gregory with a variety of duties connected with the maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline. Thus we find them commissioned to take measures for the filling up of vacant bishoprics,[5] to provide for the welfare of the churches and monasteries,[6] to rectify abuses in churches, monasteries, and hospitals,[7] to act against heretics,[8] to arrange for the holding of local synods,[9] to enforce discipline and punish offenders.[10] Even bishops themselves were subject to their supervision. "We are sending our Chartulary Hadrian," writes Gregory, on one occasion,[11] "to manage the Patrimony of our

[1] Greg. *Epp.* ix. 30.

[2] *Ibid.* ii. 22.

[3] *Ibid.* i. 18, 44, 48, 54, 65; ii. 3, 31; iii. 55; iv. 43; v. 58; vi. 4, etc.

[4] *Ibid.* i. 69; iii. 5, 8, 9; v. 32; vii. 19, 41; viii. 23; ix. 39, 193, 209; xi. 58, etc.

[5] *Ibid.* i. 18; iii. 22, 35, 39; v. 9, 20, 23; vii. 38; ix. 142.

[6] *Ibid.* i. 67; v. 23; viii. 23; ix. 170, 172.

[7] *Ibid.* i. 39, 40, 48, 50, 66; v. 33; ix. 120; xiv. 2.

[8] *Ibid.* ii. 46; viii. 23.

[9] *Ibid.* i. 82.

[10] *Ibid.* i. 82; ii. 22; iii. 1, 27, 40; iv. 6; v. 4, 28, 32; x. 4; xi. 53.

[11] *Ibid.* xiii. 22. So again, Peter, Rector of Campania, was ordered to reconcile Festus bishop of Capua, to his disaffected clergy (*ibid.* iii. 34); Sabinus, Rector of Bruttii, was commissioned to settle a dispute between the

Church in the district of Syracuse . . . and we have charged him, if he hears of any irregularities committed by our most reverend brethren the bishops, first of all to reprove them privately and modestly, and then, if the offences are not corrected, to report the matter to us at once."

But while he found it convenient on some occasions to use his rectors and defensors to spy upon the bishops and keep them in order, Gregory had no intention of lessening the bishop's authority over his own clergy, or in any way diminishing his privileges. Thus he wrote to Romanus, Rector of the Syracusan Patrimony:[1] "We have been informed that if any one

bishop and clergy of Reggio (*ibid.* ix. 129), and again to watch and from time to time admonish the careless Bishop of Consentia: "If you see that he continues to be as negligent as he has been up to the present, we desire you to do everything yourself which he ought to do, that the interests of the Church may not suffer any damage. In that case inform us without delay of what you have done, that we may send you further instructions" (*ibid.* ix. 122). So also when Bishop Exhilaratus, after a long penance at Rome, was sent back to his diocese, Fantinus, the Papal agent at Palermo, was ordered to overlook his actions: "Admonish him frequently to be kind and charitable in the treatment of his clergy, and if necessary to be careful in punishing their offences. We also desire you to admonish his clergy to behave to him with that humility and submissiveness which God requires, and never to presume to treat him disrespectfully. And if any of them, bishop or clergy, fail to comply with your admonitions, you have our authority either (if you think it desirable) to punish their sin of disobedience with such penalties as the canons prescribe, or else to report the matter to us at once, so that we may be able to make arrangements that those who are incited to break loose by the goad of evil inclinations may be hindered from quitting the right road by the curb of discipline" (*ibid.* xiv. 4). In another letter Gregory charged the Papal agents in the different patrimonies to see that no bishop had any women living in their houses, "except a mother, aunt, sister, or similar relation, with regard to whom there can be no suspicion of evil" (*ibid.* ix. 110). Several other instances of such extended powers conferred on the Roman agents might easily be adduced.

[1] Greg. *Epp.* xi. 24. A similar rebuke was addressed to Vitalis, the Defensor in Sardinia, who was said to have supported some insubordinate clergy against their bishop. "Never presume to do such a thing again," Gregory wrote. "If an ecclesiastic has committed a fault in a matter in which he may fairly ask for your assistance, you may go respectfully to the bishop and (according to your view of the case) plead before him, not as a protector of crime, but as an intercessor for one who has offended; and thus you may help the penitent without trenching on the rights of his superior. And, indeed, if any of the clergy put forward just claims, you must not refuse them the help of the Apostolic See; nevertheless, you must treat every bishop with the respect due to him, so that your protection of the clergy may not cause the discipline of the Church to be relaxed" (*ibid.* ix. 203).

brings an action against any of the clergy, you set aside the bishops and compel the clergy to appear before your tribunal. If this is really the case, such conduct is highly improper, and we therefore charge you, by the authority of this document, not to venture to do such a thing again. If any one brings an action against any ecclesiastic, he should go to the bishop and ask him either to try the matter himself or else to appoint judges to try it, or, if it is a case for arbitration, to make such arrangements as will compel the parties interested to choose arbitrators. If, however, any ecclesiastic or layman has a suit against a bishop, then you ought to interpose with a view to either trying the case yourself or inducing them to choose arbitrators. If you do not respect the rightful jurisdiction of every bishop, you are doing nothing but destroy that ecclesiastical order which it is your special duty to maintain." Similarly the Pope was most anxious that his agents should not interfere to defeat the interests of public justice as administered by the secular officers. "We have been informed"—so he wrote to Romanus[1]—"that certain persons of very little discretion desire to involve us in the dangers to which their own pride has exposed them, and to obtain such protection from the officials of the Church as would make the officials themselves responsible for their offences. I therefore admonish you by this present document, and through you I admonish our brother and fellow-bishop, the Lord John (of Syracuse), and all others whom it may concern, that whether letters come from us on the subject or not, the assistance of the Church should be vouchsafed to people with great precaution, so that, if any persons be involved in charges of peculation against the State, we may not seem to be defending them in defiance of justice; lest, by indiscreetly endeavouring to protect them, we should transfer to ourselves the ill fame of the culprits. So far as is consistent with the duty of the Church, succour those you can by advice and intercessions; but do it in such a way that, while you help them, you may not defile the reputation of the Holy Church."

[1] Greg. *Epp.* ix. 79. Cf. iii. 5: "Si in iudiciis laicorum privilegia turbare non cupimus, ita eis praeiudicantibus moderata te volumus auctoritate resistere. Violentos namque laicos coercere non contra leges est agere, sed legi ferre subsidium."

To reward the defensors for their services and to increase their dignity, Gregory formed them into a College, and bestowed upon the first seven, whose services to the Church had been pre-eminent, the title of Regionarii, which was also borne by the seven chief members of the Colleges of Notaries and Subdeacons. The title carried with it the privilege of sitting in the assembly of the clergy when the Pope was not present, besides other honours. The head of the seven was called the Primicerius Defensorum. To him and to the other Regionarii was committed the administration of the property in the fourteen regions of Rome; although, if any of them went to live in the provinces, they retained their privilege of precedence over the other defensors.[1] Both the Regionarii and the other members of the College received formal letters of appointment from the Pope.[2]

That the office of defensor was one alike of power and emolument may be gathered from the fact that certain imposters who impudently claimed to be defensors, were in the habit of levying oppressive exactions on the bishops of Sicily. Gregory wrote to warn the bishops against these frauds, and he ordered that even genuine defensors, unless they could produce letters of authorization under his own hand or that of the rector of the patrimony, were to journey at their own expense and exact no toll from the bishops. It seems, however, that, despite this letter, the frauds of the pseudo-defensors still continued.[3]

Below the governors of the patrimonies, and subject to their directions, was a class of agents, called Actores or Actionarii, who served as the subordinate assistants of the rectors and defensors. They were obliged to receive the tonsure, and were appointed by diploma.[4] The office seems to have been permanent. In some cases, moreover, where the work was heavy, we find Notaries or Chartularies attached to patrimonies to assist the governors. These notaries, however, seem to have been appointed for emergencies, and they took a position nearly equal to that of the governors, whom they sometimes succeeded in the office.

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 20; Greg. *Epp.* viii. 16; ix. 118.
[2] Greg. *Epp.* i. 68; v. 26; ix. 22, 97.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 68; ix. 22.
[4] *Ibid.* ii. 38.

Below the actionarii came the Conductores or farmers, who leased the lands of the Church, saw that they were properly cultivated, collected the produce, and were responsible to the Roman agents for the rents, which were partly in money and partly in kind. As a class they were an unprincipled and dishonest set of men, and their cruel and oppressive exactions on the tenants called forth, as we shall see, on more than one occasion, the hot indignation of Gregory.

Lastly, there was the Familia of the Church, consisting of two classes—the Coloni or Rustici, who cultivated the soil; and the Slaves of the Church. The coloni were serfs attached to the soil. They could not remove from the estate on which they were settled without permission of the landlord, nor could they marry outside it. They possessed private property, but, since that property was regarded by the landlord as security for the rent, they could not alienate any portion of it without his consent. In legal actions, moreover, they could only be represented by the landlord; and they could be punished in person or property by the landlord at his own discretion. Of the sufferings of this class we shall hear more immediately.

Such, then, was the machinery for managing the estates of the Roman Church. The manner of its working will best be seen by means of some quotations from Gregory's letters, which throw considerable light on this very obscure subject.

I have already had occasion to refer incidentally to Peter the Subdeacon, the Rector of the wealthy and important Patrimony in Sicily. To this man, who seems on the whole to have been a person of somewhat feeble character, Gregory, in March 591, wrote a letter, laying down clear principles for his guidance in the discharge of his rectorial duties. It seems that the last rector but one—a layman named Antoninus—had been guilty of very sharp practice in his dealings both with the serfs of the Church and with neighbouring landowners. Gregory, therefore, wrote to caution Peter against all such dishonest proceedings, and to point out the general line of action which he wished him to pursue.[1]

"It has come to our knowledge that during the last ten years, from the time of Antoninus the Defensor to the present day, many persons have been unjustly treated by the Roman

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 39*a*.

Church—so much so, that some of them publicly complain that their land has been forcibly occupied, their slaves taken away, and their property removed, not in consequence of any judicial decision, but by violence. I wish you to inquire diligently into all these matters, and whatever you find has been forcibly taken away or unjustly detained on behalf of our Church during these ten years, I charge you by the authority of this present order to restore it to its proper owner, lest he who has been wronged shall be compelled to come to me, and to undertake so long and troublesome a journey, when, moreover, it is impossible to decide here whether his statement is true or not. Consider well, then, the majesty of the Judge that is coming, and restore everything that has been unlawfully taken away; knowing that you win for me a great gain, if you seek to accumulate the rewards of heaven, rather than the riches of the earth."

I may here remark that the violent and unjust procedure of Antoninus was by no means singular. As we know from Gregory's letters, other agents of the Roman Church were as bad or worse. Thus Candidus, a deputy-defensor in Sicily, seized the ship and property of a Jew in liquidation of a debt, but yet, though the debt was thus discharged, refused to return him his note-of-hand.[1] Complaints reached Gregory also from the Church of Taormina, that certain properties had been unjustly seized by the Roman bailiffs[2]; from a monastery of Campania, that slaves belonging to it were detained[3]; from a certain Gaudiosus, that his sons had been unlawfully seized as slaves[4]; from a lady named Herene, that some of her people were detained by force.[5] And in this respect the agents of other Churches followed the bad example of the agents of Rome.[6] In all such cases Gregory insisted on strict justice being done. "I will not have the purse of the Church defiled by base gains," he said.[7] And again: "As we ought not to allow property belonging to the Church to be lost, so we consider it a breach of law to try and get hold of what belongs to others."[8] In cases of doubt he considered it "better to incline to kindness than to press the letter of the law,

[1] Greg. *Epp.* ix. 40. [2] *Ibid.* i. 71. [3] *Ibid.* v. 33.
[4] *Ibid.* i. 53. [5] *Ibid.* ix. 192.
[6] *Ibid.* viii. 3; ix. 83, 145, 146.
[7] *Ibid.* i. 42: "sacculum ecclesiae ex lucris turpibus nolumus inquinari."
[8] *Ibid.* i. 63.

especially when, by surrendering a small matter, we give merciful assistance to the poor and orphan without burdening the Church."[1] For, as he says elsewhere, "If with compassion and kindness we help our neighbours in their distress, we shall without doubt find the Lord merciful to our prayers." But to continue:—

"We know that many persons complain of the loss of slaves. They say that if any man's slave runs away from his master and claims to belong to the Church, the rectors of the Church at once receive him as a Church slave, not obtaining any legal decision on the subject, but supporting the assertion of the slave by force. Now this is as displeasing to me as it is abhorrent to true justice. Wherefore I desire your Experience to redress the wrong without delay, wherever you find that anything of the sort has happened. And if there are any slaves now belonging to the Church who were taken from their former masters without legal trial, they must be given back before the trial takes place, so that if the Church can establish a legal claim to them, they may be taken from their masters by a regular action at law.

"Correct all these grievances without fail. For you will be a true soldier of the Apostle St. Peter if, in the management of his affairs, you are a zealous guardian of the truth, even when he gains nothing by your being so.

"If you see that anything rightfully belongs to the Church, never attempt to protect the possession of it by force, especially as I have made a decree, and confirmed it by an anathema, that no titles of ownership[2] are ever to be affixed by our Church to any land in the city or in the country. Whatever belongs rightfully to the poor ought to be maintained by righteousness, lest, if a good object be pursued in a bad way, our just claims be convicted of injustice by Almighty God.

"I pray that the nobles and the Praetor (of Sicily) may love you for your humility, not dread you for your pride. And yet, if by any chance you learn that they are acting unjustly to the poor, at once exchange your humility for resoluteness. Be always submissive to them when they act aright, but oppose them boldly when they act amiss. Take care, however, that there be no weakness in your humility, and no harshness in the

[1] Greg. *Epp.* ix. 48.

[2] Tituli. See above, p. 262.

exercise of your dignity. But let justice season your humility, and let humility temper your justice."

The wrongs here complained of were wrongs inflicted by the Roman agents on neighbouring proprietors. Two months later, however, Gregory sent another long letter to Peter, containing a list of abuses from which the tenants on the lands of the Church were suffering.[1] This letter, while it illustrates Gregory's conscientious anxiety to deal equitably and kindly with those who laboured on the Church estates, and also his determination to acquaint himself with every detail connected with the management of the patrimonies, at the same time proves how easily frauds crept in, and how defenceless the peasants were under ordinary circumstances, when the landlord was grasping, or indifferent, or non-resident. It is clear, indeed, that the management of the Church property was by no means free from the scandals which had long brought discredit on the Imperial administration, and the reasons in both cases were substantially the same. It was almost impossible for the central authority, removed at such a distance, to exercise an efficient supervision over the actions of its agents. Moreover, these agents were often badly appointed, badly paid, and badly staffed. Thus an unscrupulous governor, entrusted with almost unlimited powers, and having in his pay a crew of subordinates as rascally as himself, had every opportunity for oppressing those who were placed in his charge. We know that even people of position, such as the bishops of Sicily, were subject to vexatious demands from persons professing to be defensors of the Roman Church. Much more, then, were the peasants of the Church exposed to the rapacity of their temporary masters. These coloni, indeed, possessed the right of appeal from the agent to the landlord—the Pope himself; but such an appeal could only be made at great expense and with great difficulty, and, even when it was made, could hardly be supported at Rome with satisfactory evidence. Hence the coloni were almost entirely defenceless, and were obliged to suffer in silence the oppressions of the nefarious agents.

The following are some of the most glaring of the corrupt practices which are referred to by Gregory in his letter to Peter, and which he did all in his power to remedy.

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 42.

The peasants were accustomed to pay an annual corn-rent. Instead of supplying so many pecks of corn, however, they in many cases compounded for paying the value of the rent in money. This had been the general custom under the Roman Empire, and it was not abandoned by the Roman Church. But unfortunately for the peasants, the corruption of the old Roman officials survived in their ecclesiastical descendants. Thus Gregory learned that in times of plenty, when corn was cheap, the peasants were compelled to pay down more than the value of the peck according to the market price. He accordingly directed that in future the market price should always be the basis of assessment, thereby giving the peasants the benefit of the low prices occasioned by abundant harvests.[1] There was, moreover, a special tax to cover loss of corn sent to Rome in the course of transhipment. With regard to this Gregory ordered that if the loss occurred through accidental causes, the peasants were to pay, but if it occurred through the neglect or delay of the Roman agents, whose business it was to provide for the transhipment, the peasants were not to be held liable for the loss, but should have their money returned.

Another iniquitous practice was reported. On some estates of the Sicilian Patrimony, as we have seen, the corn-rent was commuted for a money payment. But on other estates the peasants were required to supply in kind a prescribed number of modii of corn. Now, the modius normally contained 16 sextarii. The conductores, however, on the pretext of allowing for short measurement, exacted more; and in one instance we hear of as many as 25 sextarii being reckoned to the modius,[2] *i.e.* half as much again over and above the correct measure. This extortion Gregory stopped by fixing the modius at 18 sextarii, or only 2 sextarii above the normal measure. He permitted, however, that an additional trifle might be demanded for the provision of the sailors who brought the corn to Rome.[3]

[1] "Cognovimus rusticos ecclesiae vehementer in frumentorum pretiis gravari, ita ut instituta summa eis in comparatione abundantiae tempore non servetur, et volumus ut iuxta pretia publica omni tempore, sive minus sive amplius frumenta nascantur, in eis comparationis mensura teneatur."

[2] Greg. *Epp.* xiii. 37.

[3] "Praecipimus ut plus quam decem et octo sextariorum modium nunquam a rusticis ecclesiae frumenta debeant accipi, nisi forte si quid est quod nautae iuxta consuetudinem superaccipiunt, quod minui ipsi in navibus adtestantur."

Again, for every golden pound, which by the rescripts of Constantine and Valentinian III had been fixed at 72 solidi, the conductores were in the habit of exacting from the peasants 73½ solidi.[1] "This practice," writes Gregory, "we utterly detest, and we desire that it may be altogether suppressed in the Patrimony." The Pope further ordered that all the small extra taxes, tributes, and imposts which the peasants were accustomed to pay separately, should be lumped together and the total value should be handed over in a single payment. And lest, after his own death, these extra taxes, once reckoned additional to, but now included in, the general rent-roll, should be again imposed (the peasants thus being compelled to pay twice over), he ordered that the peasants should be given charters of security (*libelli securitatis*), signed by the rector, and declaring that each was to pay a certain amount to the exclusion of all extra duties. Whatever of the original small payments was reckoned as the perquisite of the rector, might be deducted from the lump sum and appropriated by that official as before.

In addition to the above-mentioned exactions, the conductores were in the habit of using false weights. Servus-Dei, who preceded Peter as Rector of Sicily, had remarked on this practice, but had not been able to put a stop to it. Gregory now ordered Peter to break all the false weights and have true ones substituted. With the exception of some few small fees,[2] nothing was to be exacted from the peasants above the tribute according to the just weight.

[1] This passage is difficult, both on account of the uncertainty of the text and because of the obscurity of the meaning. (1) Ewald reads: "Cognovimus etiam, in aliquibus massis ecclesiae exactionem valde iniustissimam fieri, ita ut libram septuagenum ternum semis quod dici nefas est exigantur, et adhuc neque hoc sufficit, sed insuper aliquid ex usu iam multorum annorum exigi dicuntur." The word "libram" is inserted by Ewald, though not found in the codices. These, however, insert the word "conductores" between "est" and "exigantur." But Ewald proves that "exigi" is never used for "exigere," and therefore rejects "conductores" as a gloss. I am inclined, however, to accept Savigny's emendation, "per conductores exigantur." (2) With regard to the meaning, it is doubtful whether the passage refers to grain measures or money. In spite of the eminent authorities who favour the former explanation, I prefer, with Ewald, to refer the allusion to the "libra auri." See Ewald's notes *in loc.*

[2] "Praeter excepta et vilicilia." For the last word several MSS. read, "vili cibo"; the Benedictine editors print "vilia cibaria." "Vilicilia" is explained as the dues paid to the "villici."

Gregory's kind consideration for the coloni is displayed in several other matters. For instance, there was a certain tax on land, called burdatio,[1] which was paid by the peasants to the Imperial Government, but was apparently collected by the ecclesiastical officials. These payments became due three times in the year—in January, May, and September. Now, Gregory heard that the first payment seriously inconvenienced the peasants, because it was made before they were able to sell their produce. Hence, to meet their liabilities, they were compelled to borrow at an exorbitant rate of interest—sometimes as much as 25 per cent.[2] Gregory accordingly gave orders that the rector should advance the money due to the Imperial Treasury, allowing the peasants to repay him by instalments at their convenience.[3] Again, the excessive fees paid by the peasants for permission to marry[4] were reduced to the sum of one solidus, or, in the case of poor persons, to even less. This nuptiale commodum was not to be credited to the Church, but was to be a perquisite of the conductores. Again, any colonus who committed a fault was to be punished in future, not in his property (for then others would suffer for his wrongdoing), but in his person. No present was to be received from him, unless he chose to give a small fee to the officer sent to execute his punishment. Again, if anything were unjustly taken from a peasant by a conductor, it was not only to be reclaimed from the conductor, but also (as was not usually done) restored to the peasant. Again, if any special supplies were necessary beyond what was usual, they were to be procured, not from the peasants, but from strangers. Thus in this very year 591, bad harvests in Italy made it necessary to order an extra supply of corn from Sicily. Gregory directed, however, that this was to be bought from the merchants, and that the coloni were not to be annoyed by being forced to sell against their will.[5] Another small regulation, made at a later time, illustrates Gregory's thoughtfulness. Some of the revenues of the Sicilian Patrimony were collected by the Bishop of Syracuse, who had made it a rule to receive the payments only in the

[1] "Burdatio est pensio quae a rusticis praestatur praedii nomine, quod Burdam vocant, nostri Borde" (Alteserra).

[2] Greg. *Epp.* ix. 108.

[3] Cf. *ibid.* v. 7.

[4] On nuptiae rusticorum, cf. *ibid.* ix. 128.

[5] *Ibid.* i. 70.

neighbourhood of Syracuse and in the estate called Gelas, thus putting those who had to pay it to considerable inconvenience. Gregory accordingly requested him to receive the debts both in the Syracusan district and in that of Palermo, not being pedantic as to the place of payment, provided that the money was forthcoming.[1]

But while Gregory provided for the welfare of the peasants, he did not overlook the interests even of the conductores. "We have learnt," he continues, "that when some conductores die, their relatives are not allowed to succeed them, but their property is appropriated for the benefit of the Church. We therefore decree that the relatives of the deceased, being themselves settled on Church estates, shall succeed as their heirs, and that no portion of the property of the deceased shall be withdrawn. But if any leave very young children, discreet persons must be chosen to look after the goods, until the children are of age to manage for themselves." Gregory also abolished the fees paid to the rector by the conductores on their appointment, for he found that for the sake of the fee the conductores were often changed, and that the farms were badly cultivated in consequence.

After dealing at length with these abuses, Gregory goes on in his letter to issue minute instructions about a variety of minor matters.

"It has come to our ears that three pounds of gold have been unjustly taken away from Peter, the conductor of Subpatriana. On this matter examine carefully Fantinus the Defensor; and if it is clear that they have been unjustly and improperly taken, restore them without delay.

"We have also learnt that the peasants have paid a second time the Government land-tax, which Theodosius collected from them but failed to pay into the Treasury, because his substance was insufficient for meeting his debt to the Church. Therefore the peasants have had to pay the Government tax twice over. But our son Servus-Dei[2] has informed us that the debt to the Church can be made good out of the effects of the deceased Theodosius; and therefore we desire that the sum of 57 solidi be

[1] Greg. *Epp.* ix. 236.

[2] Similar names are not infrequent in Gregory's letters. Compare Quodvultdeus (*Epp.* ii. 52), Spesindeo (xi. 12), Cumquodeus (vii. 32), Deusdedit (xi. 6), Adeodatus (iii. 48).

handed over to the peasants in full, that they may not be found to have paid their tax twice. Moreover, if it be the case that 40 solidi of his effects remain over and above what will indemnify the peasants (which sum you are also said to have by you), we direct that they be given to his daughter, to enable her to recover her property that she has pawned. We direct also that her father's goblet be restored to her.

"The Glorious Magister Militum Campanianus has bequeathed 12 solidi a year out of the Varonian estate to his notary John. This we order you to pay every year without any hesitation to the granddaughter of Euplus the conductor, although she has received all the movable goods of the said Euplus, with the exception of his money. We direct you also to give her 25 solidi of his money.

"A silver saucer is said to have been pawned for one solidus and a cup for 6 solidi. Question Dominicus, the secretary, or others who may know about it, and redeem the pledge and restore the aforesaid small vessels.

"We have to thank your Solicitude," Gregory continues, ironically, "for that, in the business of my brother, after I directed you to send him back his money, you have forgotten the matter as completely as if the order had proceeded from the meanest of your slaves. But now, let—I will not say your Experience, but—your Negligence take the trouble to get this done. Anything of his which you may find to have been lodged with Antoninus, send back with all speed."

The letter concludes with these emphatic words: "Read all these things carefully, and lay aside that cherished negligence of yours. Cause my writings which I have addressed to the peasants to be read in all the estates, that they may know how to protect themselves by my authority against injustice, and let the originals or copies thereof be given them. See that you carry out all my injunctions to the full; for as concerns what I have written to you for the preservation of justice my conscience is clear; you are responsible if you neglect my words. Fix your thoughts on the terrible Judge who is coming, and let that thought make you tremble now before His Advent; lest hereafter you fear Him without avail, when at His presence heaven and earth shall tremble. You have heard what I wish: take care that you do it."

This remarkable letter, the composition of which must have cost Gregory many hours of anxious thought, seems to indicate clearly that the troubles of the coloni arose mainly from two causes—the flagrant dishonesty of the agents and bailiffs, and the system of fees. The former abuse, as we have seen, Gregory made every effort to entirely suppress. The latter, the system of fees, he was unable to do away with altogether, but he endeavoured to cut it down and to render it as little burdensome as possible. At the same time, he took care to compensate his agents for any loss which they might sustain in this direction, by paying them liberally for their services. In the case of Fantinus, a defensor in Sicily, Gregory laid down the principle which he wished to be observed: "Fix what he is to receive for his work, and let him remember that a man who is supported from the Church funds is not to be looking to his own private enrichment. If anything is acquired for the Church by the agents of the Church, without sin and without grasping, it is right that they should be rewarded for their toil; but it must be left to us to decide how they shall be remunerated."[1]

The difficulty which Gregory found in securing a righteous administration may be illustrated from another letter written a year later to the same Peter in Sicily. "I have learnt," says the Pope,[2] "that certain properties and several farms do not rightfully belong to us, and that you know it, but, on account of the vehement entreaties of certain persons, or through timidity, you are afraid to restore them to their proper owners. But if you were really a Christian, you would fear the judgment of God more than the voices of men. Take notice that on this matter I admonish you unceasingly. If you fail to carry out my directions, you will have my words also as a testimony against you at the last day."

The same letter gives us further insight into Gregory's astonishing grasp of detail, and his thorough knowledge of the management of the estates of which he was the landlord. "The cows which are barren from age and the bulls which are not wanted should be sold, so that their price at all events may be of some benefit to us. The herds of mares, which are utterly unprofitable to us, I wish to be sold in lots, and only four hundred of the younger ones kept for breeding. These four

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 42. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 38.

hundred should be given to the conductores, one to each of them; and let some payment be made on behalf of them every year. For it is very hard that we should spend 60 solidi annually on the herdsmen, and should not receive 60 denarii from the herds themselves. Distribute then, as we have said, some of the mares among the conductores, and turn the rest into money. As for the herdsmen, place them on the different farms, that they may be of some use in the cultivation of the land. All the brazen vessels and utensils, the property of the Church, at Syracuse and Palermo, should be sold before they are entirely destroyed from age."

So again, on another occasion, Gregory sent to Pantaleo the notary some elaborate directions how to dispose of monies accumulated by the fraudulent practices of the conductores[1]: "We desire your Experience with all faithfulness and integrity —having the fear of God before your eyes, and remembering the strictness of the blessed Apostle Peter—to make a list throughout each estate of poor and indigent peasants, and with the money accumulated by fraud to buy and distribute among them cows, sheep, and swine. Whatever the common fund may amount to, first, as I have said, draw up a list, and afterwards take pains to distribute to each according to his degree of poverty. For I, as the Teacher of the Gentiles doth testify, *have all and abound;* nor do I seek money, but reward. So act, therefore, that in the day of judgment you may show me the fruit of your labour in the service committed to you."

To agents who were negligent in the discharge of their duties Gregory did not scruple to send very sharp rebukes. Thus he wrote to one[2]: "We charged you at your departure and afterwards reminded you by letter to look after the poor, and send us information about any in your parts whom you should learn to be in want. But in scarcely any case have you troubled yourself to do this." Even to his favourite Peter, the Pope sent more than one cutting reproof.[3] "I have learnt from the Abbat Martinianus that the building in the Praetorian Monastery is not yet even half completed. If this is the case, I can only praise the great diligence of your Experience! But now at least be admonished; rouse up, and devote all the energy you have to the building of this monastery."

[1] Greg. *Epp.* xiii. 37. [2] *Ibid.* i. 37. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 38.

A large proportion of the revenues of the Roman Church was expended by Gregory's direction in charity. The patrimonies, according to his view, were the estates of the poor, and must be administered primarily for their advantage. This he was never weary of impressing upon his agents. "I remember," he wrote to one,[1] "that I have frequently charged you, both by letter and by word of mouth, to act as my representative, not so much to promote the worldly interests of the Church, as to relieve the poor in their distress, and especially to protect them from oppression." His own pleasure in relieving the necessities of the deserving is well expressed in a very characteristic letter which he sent to a certain Julianus, who had diffidently asked for a subvention for his monastery.[2]

"When I received your letter I opened it with pleasure, but after I had read it through I folded it up with sorrow. For I learnt from it that through modesty you had for long concealed from me a circumstance of which you ought to have informed me. Now it is certain that you can feel but little love for a man with whom you are so bashful, and I am much grieved to find that you love me less than I thought. But indeed you really help me greatly when you take care to provide me with opportunities for doing a kindness. Nor ought you to be ashamed of being importunate for alms when you are addressing one who has no property of his own, but only administers the property of the poor. You ought rather to have pleaded boldly with me in the matter, because I am a bishop, even if you did not know the love I bear towards you. For seeing that I love you deeply, and that I hold the office of steward to the property of the poor, I must own that your bashfulness was very blameable. And I reprove you thus strongly, that I may drive away utterly this false modesty from your heart, so that in future I may be greatly helped by your suggestions in doing acts of kindness. We have therefore sent an order to Adrian, Notary and Rector of our Patrimony (in Sicily), to pay 10 solidi a year to the monastery built by you in the city of Catania; and we trust you will not be offended, because this is not a present bestowed on you by us, but a gift from St. Peter the chief of the Apostles."

A complete list of all Gregory's charities and benefactions

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 53. [2] *Ibid.* xiii. 23.

would fill a moderate-sized volume. The following selection, however, will give some idea of their extent and variety; and will also show with what care the Pope acquainted himself with the necessities, and took measures for the relief, of even the humblest claimants on his bounty.[1]

A person named Filimuth, who was blind and poor, was awarded an annual allowance of 24 pecks of wheat, 12 pecks of beans, and 20 decimatae of wine[2]: two ladies, Palatina and Viviana, who had fallen on evil days, were given each 20 solidi and 300 pecks of wheat[3]: a certain Pastor, "who labours under exceeding weakness of sight, having a wife and two slaves," was presented with 300 pecks of wheat and 300 of beans.[4] To an ex-Praetor, Libertinus, who had lost his fortune, Gregory sent twenty suits of clothing for his servants—a gift offered with the most delicate consideration for the feelings of the ruined man: "I beg that you will not take the present amiss. For anything, however trifling, which is offered from the property of St. Peter should be regarded as a great blessing, seeing that he will have power both to bestow on you greater things, and to hold out to you eternal benefits with Almighty God."[5] A bishop named Ecclesius complained that he suffered from cold because he had no winter clothing. So Gregory sent him "a cloak with a double nap."[6] One Marcellus, who was doing penance in a monastery at Palermo, was supplied with money for food, clothes, and bedding, and also with a provision for his servant.[7] An annual pension was awarded to John, a monk, who had formerly belonged to the Istrian schismatics[8]; to three converted Jews[9]; to a decayed provincial governor, "who is suffering from great poverty in Sicily"[10]; to an ex-defensor of the Church[11]; to the son of a deceased serf of the Church, who had become blind[12]; to some nuns of Nola, "who are so poor that they cannot afford food and clothes"[13]; and others. The

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 55 writes: "Qualiter sane Gregorius per procuratores ecclesiasticorum patrimoniorum, velut Argus quidam luminosissimus, per totius mundi latitudinem suae pastoralis sollicitudinis oculos circumtulerit, non ab re forsitan duxerim perstringendum."

[2] Greg. *Epp.* i. 44. [3] *Ibid.* i. 37. [4] *Ibid.* i. 65.
[5] *Ibid.* x. 12. [6] *Ibid.* xiv. 15: "amphiballum tunicam."
[7] *Ibid.* i. 18. [8] *Ibid.* vi. 36. [9] *Ibid.* iv. 31.
[10] *Ibid.* ii. 38. [11] *Ibid.* ix. 109. [12] *Ibid.* iv. 28.
[13] *Ibid.* i. 23.

confiscated property of a Church defensor who had died in debt to the Church, was given back to his three surviving sons.[1] One Adeodatus, who had built a house on Church land in Campania, and had afterwards suffered losses, had his rent reduced by half.[2] To Theodore, his consiliarius, who had no servants, Gregory made a present of a Sicilian slave named Acosimus.[3] A Syrian merchant, whose sons had been seized for his debts, was relieved.[4] Argentius, a serf of the Church, was excused rent for the rest of his life, that he might continue to exercise his famous hospitality.[5]

Nor was Gregory's munificence confined to individuals. Churches, monasteries, public institutions of all kinds, were liberally assisted. To Peter, abbat of St. Peter's in the island of Eumorphiana, 1500 pounds of lead were given for building purposes[6]; the Monastery of St. Archangel in Bruttii was relieved of four-fifths of the rent paid for an adjoining field belonging to the Church[7]; estates in Rome were handed over to two nunneries,[8] and no less than three thousand Roman nuns were supported by the Church[9]; to celebrate the dedication of an oratory at Palermo, a grant was made of 10 gold solidi, 30 amphorae of wine, 200 loaves, 2 orcae of oil, 12 wethers, and 100 hens[10]; even in distant Jerusalem, a hospital was founded,[11] and money, together with 15 cloaks, 30 blankets, and 15 beds, was sent to the monks of Mount Sinai.[12] A hospital in Sicily, again, received a present of 10 mares and a stallion.[13] A monastery in Tuscany was given some land to be enjoyed free of rent for thirty years.[14] To Bishop Zeno in Epirus Gregory sent 1000 pecks of wheat for the relief of his people[15]; and 150 solidi were forwarded to Corsica, to purchase baptismal robes for converted Jews.[16] Nothing could be more graceful than the manner in which Gregory responded to an appeal for help from Elias, the abbat of a monastery in Isauria. The old man had made a request for 50 solidi for the needs of his monks, but fearing he had asked too much, he reduced his demand to 40, and suggested

[1] Greg. *Epp.* iii. 21.
[2] *Ibid.* ix. 190.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 18.
[4] *Ibid.* iii. 55; iv. 43.
[5] *Ibid.* ix. 37.
[6] *Ibid.* i. 48.
[7] *Ibid.* ii. 3.
[8] *Ibid.* ii. 10; iii. 17.
[9] *Ibid.* vii. 23.
[10] *Ibid.* i. 54.
[11] Joh. Diac. ii. 52.
[12] Greg. *Epp.* xi. 2.
[13] *Ibid.* ix. 8.
[14] *Ibid.* ix. 96.
[15] *Ibid.* vi. 4.
[16] *Ibid.* viii. 1.

that even this sum was more than he ought perhaps to beg. Gregory wrote in answer:[1] "Since you have been so considerate of our property, we must not be less considerate towards you. We have sent you, therefore, 50 solidi; and for fear this should not be enough, we have added 10 more; and lest even that should not suffice, we have sent you 12 more in addition. And herein we recognize your love for us, that you place full confidence in us, as you ought to do."

There was one special form of charity, however, in which Gregory, as a patriotic Italian and as chief bishop in Italy, was particularly interested. This was the redemption of captives taken in the Lombard wars and held to ransom. In Gregory's letters we find frequent allusions to such redemption. He urged the duty upon bishops, especially with reference to their own clergy.[2] He received with gratitude sums of money sent to him for this purpose by wealthy friends at Constantinople.[3] He even authorized the sale of Church plate to obtain cash to carry on the work.[4] He was often applied to for help by persons who had been redeemed, but afterwards found themselves unable to repay the money which had been advanced for their ransom.[5] He himself expended large sums upon this good object, and sent an agent even as far as Barce in Libya, to redeem Italians who were offered for sale in the great slave-mart there.[6] A careful business letter on the subject, which Gregory sent in 595 to Anthemius, Rector of the Patrimony in Campania, is worth quoting.[7]

"How great is our grief and how great the trouble of our heart concerning what has happened in Campania, we cannot express. You yourself can imagine what it is, knowing, as you do, the greatness of the disaster. In regard to this matter we have forwarded to your Experience, by the Magnificent Stephen, bearer of these presents, a sum of money for the redemption of the captives who have been taken; and we admonish you to act with all possible carefulness and zeal, and to hasten to redeem such freemen as to your knowledge lack means sufficient to ransom themselves. Moreover, do not hesitate to ransom

[1] Greg. *Epp.* v. 35.
[2] *Ibid.* iv. 17; ii. 45; iii. 40.
[3] *Ibid.* v. 46; vii. 23, 25; viii. 22.
[4] *Ibid.* vii. 13, 35.
[5] *Ibid.* iii. 40; iv. 17; ix. 52, 84.
[6] *Ibid.* iii. 16.
[7] *Ibid.* vi. 32.

also any slaves whose masters are too poor to come forward and redeem them. Likewise you will make it your business to redeem the slaves of the Church who have been lost by your neglect. And in the case of all persons thus redeemed you must be very careful to make out a list (specifying their names, where each is, what he is doing, and where he came from), which you can bring with you when you come. Hasten to show yourself zealous in this matter, that those who are to be redeemed may incur no risk through any negligence of yours—in which case you would become highly blameable in our eyes. But work especially for this also, that these captives may be recovered, if possible, at a low price."

In this, as indeed in all the financial and other business connected with the Patrimony, we remark in Gregory a sound business instinct, a talent for organization, and a wonderful grasp of detail. He issues his orders to his agents as though he had spent his whole life in studying how to manage estates. He is at home in every department of the subject. Whence he derived his practical knowledge, and how he found time to acquaint himself so thoroughly with the working of each individual patrimony, is a mystery. But somehow or other he managed to learn all that it was necessary for him to know, and he was always ready to apply his knowledge with excellent effect. Gregory was one of the best of the Papal landlords. Under his rule the estates of the Church increased in value, the tenants were prosperous and contented, and the revenues poured into the treasury. His only fault, as a business man, was that he was too lavish of these revenues when they came, so that he was even said to have depleted the treasury of his Church by his unlimited charities.[1] This excessive liberality, however, must be ascribed, not to any carelessness or extravagance on Gregory's part, but to his view of his duty as administrator of the property of the poor. The fault, if fault it was, was one of conscience, not of intellect or practical intelligence. In respect of the last we can find no flaw. In no department of his life and work, indeed, does Gregory so well deserve his title of the Great, as in that connected with the management of the Patrimony of St. Peter.

[1] Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 69; cf. Paul. Diac. *Vita* 29.

(2) *The Dialogues.*

Towards the close of the year 593 or in the spring of 594 Gregory, at the urgent entreaty of his friends in Rome, published, under the title of *Dialogues* a collection of stories, which for several centuries contributed more than anything else to make his name popular. In the *Euchologion*, indeed, and in Eastern books generally, the great Pope is designated "Gregory of the *Dialogue*." It is true that the genuineness of the curious work that we possess under this title has not been left unquestioned; but it is now generally admitted that the grounds for doubting it are entirely inadequate. Both the external and the internal evidence are almost as good as we could desire. In his correspondence Gregory himself alludes to a compilation he was making of stories of "the miracles of the Fathers which were done in Italy,"[1] and some of the legends of the *Dialogues* are found almost word for word in the *Sermons*.[2] That he actually did complete such a compilation is asserted by Bede,[3] Paul the Deacon,[4] John the Deacon,[5] the Papal biographer,[6] and many others. Further, all the best manuscripts of the book we have, attribute its authorship to Gregory. The internal evidence, again, is scarcely less conclusive. The doctrine of the *Dialogues*, though it sometimes goes beyond, is nevertheless in harmony with the

[1] Greg. *Epp.* iii. 50: "Fratres mei, qui mecum familiariter vivunt, omni modo me compellunt, aliqua de miraculis patrum, quae in Italia facta audivimus, sub brevitate scribere. Ad quam rem solatio vestrae charitatis vehementer indigeo, ut quaeque vobis in memoriam redeunt, quaeque cognovisse vos contigit, mihi breviter indicetis." As this letter was written in the summer of 593, Gregory cannot have published the *Dialogues* before the autumn of this year. That date harmonizes with *Dial.* iv. 47, where Gregory states that he, with the rest of the monks, buried John "three years" before. On the other hand, the date 594 better suits the allusion to the great flood of 589, "ante hoc fere quinquennium" (*Dial.* iii. 19). This, however, is probably a slip, for in *Dial.* iv. 26, he talks of the pestilence "three years ago," *i.e.* in 590. I believe, therefore, that the *Dialogues* were completed late in 593; possibly some final touches were added and the book was published in 594.

[2] Compare *Dial.* iv. 27 and *Hom. in Ev.* xxxvi. § 13; *Dial.* iv. 14 and *Hom. in Ev.* xv. § 5; *Dial.* iv. 15 and *Hom. in Ev.* xl. § 11; *Dial.* iv. 16 and *Hom. in Ev.* xxxviii. § 15; *Dial.* iv. 38 and *Hom. in Ev.* xxxviii. § 16; *Dial.* iv. 38 and *Hom. in Ev.* xii. § 7; *Dial.* iv. 56 and *Hom. in Ev.* xxxvii. § 9.

[3] Baeda *H. E.* ii. 1.

[4] Paul. Diac. *Vita* 14.

[5] Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 75.

[6] *Lib. Pont. Vita Zachariae.*

doctrine of the *Morals* and the *Sermons*.[1] The style is certainly a little different, but not more so than we should naturally expect, since the most consistent author would necessarily express himself in somewhat different manners in a sermon, a letter, a theological treatise, and a book of tales. And, lastly, we observe in the *Dialogues* a number of little illustrative touches and allusions, which are quite what we should look for if the author was Gregory, but which would imply an unusual degree of literary skill in any writer living at a later time, who wished to pass off his book as the handiwork of the Pope.[2] For these and other reasons the great majority of critics accept the ancient tradition, and agree in ascribing the four books of the *Dialogues* to Gregory the Great. The treatise was translated into Greek, but not with strict accuracy, by the order or (if John may be trusted) by the hand of Pope Zacharias[3] (November 741–March 752), and in its Greek form was published throughout the East. Translations were also made into Anglo-Saxon (by Bishop Waerferth of Worcester) and into French.[4]

The title of this curious work is, "The Four Books of the Dialogues of St. Gregory the Pope, concerning the Life and Miracles of Italian Fathers and concerning the Eternity of Souls." The second book is wholly devoted to the life of St. Benedict—the earliest biography of that saint which we possess—and some further account of it will be given in the chapter on Gregory's contribution to Western Monasticism. The fourth book is partly concerned with discussions of doctrinal subjects, such as Purgatory and the Holy Eucharist; and an exposition of Gregory's views on these matters will fall most appropriately into the Third Part of this work, which deals at length with his theology. The remainder of the *Dialogues* consists of a collection of marvellous stories—the visions, prophecies, and miracles of holy men who were either natives of Italy or at least sojourned in that country, and who were either still living when the book was written or else—at any rate in the majority of cases—had been living within the last seventy years.

Such collections of pious anecdotes formed the characteristic

[1] See the notes prefixed to the *Dialogues* (Migne *P. L.* lxxvii. p. 135).
[2] Migne, lxxvii. pp. 130, 139.
[3] Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 75; *Lib. Pont. Vita Zachariae.*
[4] W. P. Ker *The Dark Ages* p. 136, *note.*

literature of the sixth and following centuries. For the mass of the clergy, as well as for the people, the legends served the purpose at once of poetry, theology, and history. They gratified and encouraged the vulgar love of the marvellous. They excited lively emotions of wonder and awe. They gave an account, which was implicitly believed, of those who were deemed the heroes of Christianity. They sometimes afforded amusement by an occasional humorous tale of demon or wizard. And, above all, they gave, or seemed to give, what the men of these times especially craved for—a proof of God's continual presence with His people, an assurance that even then, when evil seemed universally triumphant, the power of God was still put forth to punish and to save. Undoubtedly Gregory and others found in these legends a consolation and a hope; undoubtedly the stories of miracles wrought in their own country and in their own times appealed to them almost as strongly as the assurances of the Bible. For they seemed to show, as it were visibly, a divine Providence watching over the children of the true Faith, guiding and glorifying their lives on earth, and giving them certain prospect of the rewards of heaven. Hence we find that from the death of Gregory to the time of Charlemagne, the principal literary works which were written or read—at any rate in Italy and France—were narratives of the lives and miracles of saints. In hagiography the history, the theology, the poetry, the philosophy, the fiction of the period are summed up.

It is possible that besides the general motive of providing some edifying and entertaining literature for his friends, Gregory had a second and more special reason for the compilation of the *Dialogues*. His book was intended, it seems likely, not only as an illustration of God's power displayed for the consolation of His people, but also as a glorification of the Catholic Faith for the conviction of heretics and unbelievers. All those who performed miracles were Catholics, and many of the miracles were performed to frustrate the malice of Arians and idolaters. Moreover, Paul the Deacon tells us that the book was sent to the Lombard queen, Theudelinda, who was herself a Catholic, though married to an Arian.[1] It is probable, therefore, that Gregory intended to demonstrate that, in spite

[1] Paul. Diac. *Hist. Lang.* iv. 5.

of the apparent successes of the heretical Lombards, God was on the side of the orthodox, and manifested His power only through the orthodox; and he perhaps hoped that by means of his stories the queen's faith would be confirmed, and the wrong belief of the heretics around her would be put to shame and confuted.

As the title indicates, Gregory composed his work in the form of a Dialogue. This species of composition was not, of course, new. Both Jerome and Theodoret had made use of it in their polemical treatises, and Palladius and Sulpicius Severus had employed it for relating the histories of saints. Gregory followed their example, doubtless in order to impart a liveliness to his narrative, and also to provide artistically an occasion for sundry explanations and digressions. He represents himself, then, as conversing with a certain Peter; perhaps he had in his mind Peter the Subdeacon, whom we have already come across as the somewhat unsatisfactory rector of the Papal estates in Sicily. However this may be, the Peter of the *Dialogues* is skilfully depicted as a stolid, matter-of-fact man, with plenty of common sense, but little imagination, extremely inquisitive about the miracles wrought by his countrymen, yet inclined to be mildly sceptical until convinced by Gregory's arguments.[1] He makes a very good foil to Gregory himself, and his questions and difficulties lead up naturally and artistically to the remarks and discussions which the author wished to introduce. We may add that this literary Peter was no doubt intended to represent, and did represent, the average ecclesiastic of the period, and his doubts and perplexities probably reflect pretty accurately the doubts and perplexities of most sixth-century churchmen.

The book opens with a scene in a Roman garden. "One day, when I was oppressed by the excessive burden of secular affairs, in which we are often obliged to spend more than is strictly due, I sought a retired spot, friendly to sorrow, and there all that was unpleasant in my occupations rose up clearly before my eyes, and I beheld as it were in a single glance all the causes of my disquiet. When I had been there a long time in deep affliction and in silence, there came to me my well-beloved son, Peter the Deacon, who from his earliest youth

[1] See, *e.g.*, *Dial.* Praef. and i. 3, 12.

had been my bosom friend and the sharer of my studies in Holy Scripture. He, seeing me thus consumed with grief and sickness, exclaimed, 'Has any new trouble befallen? Why are you so sad beyond your wont?'" Thereupon Gregory gave utterance to a long lament over his lost monastic peace, and the press of worldly business from which he was unable to escape, and he added that his sorrow was increased when he called to his remembrance the holy lives of "those men who with their whole minds had left this present world." Peter replied that he did not know of any in Italy to whom Gregory could thus allude. "I do not doubt," he said, "that there have been good men here, but I think that either they have wrought no signs and wonders, or else these signs and wonders have been so buried in silence that we know not whether they were wrought or not." Gregory answered that the day would not be long enough to tell all that he had heard or witnessed of the marvellous deeds of the saints; yet on Peter's entreaty he consented to relate a few examples. "Such things as venerable and holy men have told me I will now repeat; and to remove all occasion for doubt, I will mention in each case the source whence I derived my information. But I would have you know that in some instances I do not reproduce all the details of the communication, but only the general sense; in others, however, I preserve both words and matter. For some of my informants told their stories in very rustic style, so that a man of letters could not decently preserve their very words in his record."

The supernatural tales which follow may be divided into three classes—stories of visions, stories of prophecies, and stories of miracles.

(*a*) Stories of *Visions*. These stories, of course, present no difficulties to the modern rationalist. That ignorant and superstitious people, living in a mystical world which they firmly believed to be haunted by legions of white-winged angels and fantastic demons, should have seen queer visions and dreamed strange dreams, is only what we should have been led *a priori* to expect. Even Gregory himself admitted, at any rate in the case of dreams, that some were occasioned wholly, and others partly, by natural causes. "Some dreams are caused," he said,[1]

[1] *Dial.* iv. 48.

"by the repletion or emptiness of the stomach, others by (diabolical) illusion, others partly by illusion and partly by our own thoughts, others partly by revelation and partly by our own thoughts." The revelations he believed to be most frequent with dying persons, though they were often accorded to people in good health. The following are among the more remarkable of the visions recorded.

A certain Jew was once travelling along the Appian Way from Campania to Rome. His road passed by Fondi, where there dwelt a bishop named Andrew, who was a good and chaste man, but who permitted a certain religious woman to live under his roof as housekeeper. When the Jew drew near Fondi, night was falling, and as he had nowhere to go, he determined to take shelter in a ruined temple of Apollo. But these pagan shrines had a bad reputation, and therefore (although he was a Jew) he took the precaution of protecting himself from demons by making the sign of the cross. Even so, however, he was too terrified to sleep. At midnight, as he lay awake, he suddenly beheld a crowd of evil spirits, moving before one who appeared their chieftain, and who took his seat within the temple. To this demon the other spirits did homage, and he inquired of each in turn what mischief they had been doing in the world. Whereupon one stepped forward and declared that he had been tempting Bishop Andrew in regard to his housekeeper, and had so far succeeded that the good man had been moved that very evening to give her an affectionate slap. The prince of the demons praised his servant highly, and made him great promises if he should finish his evil work; then, glancing towards the trembling Jew, he inquired who that presumptuous fellow was, who dared to lie in the temple. The evil spirits looked, and were amazed to find him marked with the cross. "Alas! alas!" they cried; "here is an empty vessel, but yet it is signed." With that they all vanished. The curious legend has a happy ending. The bishop, when he heard the story, turned away his housekeeper and every other woman in his household, and never afterwards had any inclination to fall in love. The Jew was converted and baptized, and the temple of Apollo was turned into a church and dedicated in commemoration of St. Andrew.[1]

[1] *Dial.* iii. 7.

Paschasius was a saintly deacon of the Roman Church, "a man of great holiness, much given to almsdeeds, a considerer of the poor, and a forgetter of himself." Unfortunately, he was a firm supporter of the anti-Pope Laurentius, the opponent of Symmachus; but he died in the highest reputation, and a demoniac was healed by touching the dalmatic on his bier. A long while after, Germanus, bishop of Capua, was ordered by his physicians to take a course of hot baths; and there, in the midst of the steaming vapours, he beheld, to his great horror, the deacon Paschasius. The spirit addressed the bishop and said: "I am appointed to this place of punishment for no other reason than because I took the part of Laurentius against Symmachus; and therefore I beseech you to pray unto our Lord for me, and by this token shall you know that your prayers have been heard, if at your next coming you find me no longer here." The bishop went away and prayed, and when he returned the spirit had vanished.[1]

There was a nun of Portus who lived a chaste life, but was given to foolish talking. When she died she was buried within the church, and the same night the sacristan, "by revelation," beheld her body cut in two, and half of it burnt before the high altar. The next morning, Gregory adds, signs of the burning were discovered on the marble pavement.[2] So again, when a certain defensor of the Milanese Church, named Valentinus, "a very shifty person, and addicted to every kind of levity," was buried in the Church of St. Syrus at Genoa, the sacristans beheld him dragged screaming from the building by two most frightful spirits. Next day the body was discovered in another tomb outside the sacred precincts.[3]

A prettier story is told of a pious Roman shoemaker named Deusdedit, who worked hard all the week, and on Saturdays used to distribute to the poor at St. Peter's Church all that he had saved over and above his necessary expenses. A friend saw in a vision a house in heaven being built for this good man, but those who were building it worked on no day save Saturday.[4]

The next tale is remarkable chiefly for its lack of point and meaning. Theodore, sacristan of St. Peter's at Rome, got

[1] *Dial.* iv. 40.
[2] *Ibid.* iv. 51.
[3] *Ibid.* iv. 53.
[4] *Ibid.* iv. 37.

up very early one morning to attend to the lamps that hung by the door. As he stood on a ladder pouring oil into the lamps, he saw beneath on the pavement the Prince of the Apostles himself, who said to him, "My fellow-freedman (*conliberte*), why have you risen so early?" and then vanished. The unfortunate sacristan was so shaken by his fright that he had to keep his bed for many days after.[1]

Some very curious devil-apparitions are related in the Life of St. Benedict. In one of the monasteries of Subiaco there was a monk who could not stay at prayers. In spite of frequent admonitions, he was in the habit of slipping out of chapel and wandering about, engaged in worldly thoughts. St. Benedict at length determined to take the matter in hand. So he came to the chapel and watched; and when the Psalms were ended and prayer began, he saw a little black boy pulling at the garments of the perverse monk, and leading him from the place. Then Benedict said to the Abbat Pompeianus and to Maurus, "Do you not see there who it is that is drawing this monk out?" But they replied, "No." "Then let us pray," said Benedict, "that you likewise may see whom this monk follows." After two days of prayer Maurus saw, but the abbat still could see nothing. "The next day, when the man of God had finished his prayer, he went out of the oratory, and found the monk standing outside, whom he forthwith hit with his staff. And from that time onwards the monk was free from the suggestion of the black boy, and remained constant at his prayers. For the old enemy, as if himself had been beaten with the whip, dared no more to take command of his thoughts."[2]

Again, after Benedict had destroyed the temple of Apollo at Monte Cassino, the devil "appeared, not covertly or in a dream, but openly and visibly in the sight of the Father,"—all afire, with flaming mouth and flashing eyes, raging against him. He complained loudly of the injuries he had received, calling the saint by name, "Benedict! Benedict!" And when he got no answer, he cried, "Thou Maledict, not Benedict, what hast

[1] *Dial.* iii. 24. At another time St. Peter appeared to a paralytic girl, and bade her in a vision go to the sacristan Acontius, and ask him to heal her. When the girl told her story to Acontius, he said to her, "If you are sent by St. Peter, rise up." Whereupon she was immediately healed (*ibid.* iii. 25).

[2] *Dial.* ii. 4. For another instance of a monk being enabled by the prayers of a saint to see what was invisible to others, see *ibid.* ii. 25.

thou to do with me? and why dost thou persecute me?" Benedict alone beheld the fiend, though the brethren heard his words.[1]

Another time, when Benedict was on his way to pray at the Oratory of St. John, he met Satan disguised as a physician riding on a mule, and carrying a horn and mortar. "Whither are you going?" asked the saint. "To give a potion to your monks," replied the devil. When Benedict got back to the monastery, he found that the devil had entered into one of the elder monks, tormenting him cruelly.[2]

On yet another occasion, when Benedict was praying in his cell, the devil appeared to him, jeering at him, and saying that he was going to visit the monks at their work. Benedict at once sent a message to the brethren, saying, "Have a care, for the wicked spirit at this hour is coming to molest you." Scarcely had the message been delivered when the devil overthrew a wall which they were building, crushing one young monk under the masonry.[3] In these stories we are already face to face with the mediaeval devil.

Near Mon' Cassino there lived in religious retirement two ladies of noble parentage who were given to abusive language. Complaints of their conduct having reached Benedict, he sent them a warning, "Have a care of your tongues, for if you do not amend, I excommunicate you." But they took no notice of the warning, and shortly afterwards died and were buried in the church. After this their nurse, "who used to make offerings to our Lord for them," beheld a dreadful sight. For in the mass, when the deacon cried out, "If there be any that communicates not, let him depart," the two nuns, spectral and terrible, arose from their graves and left the church. This, according to the nurse's testimony, happened several times. At last recourse was had to Benedict, who "with his own hands gave the oblation, saying, 'Go, cause this oblation to be offered to our Lord, and they shall be no longer excommunicate." Thenceforward the troubled spirits were seen no more.[4]

One vision recorded by Gregory is of an unusual character. Benedict sent some monks to build a monastery at Terracina, promising to come to them on a certain day. He remained,

[1] *Dial.* ii. 8.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. 30.
[3] *Ibid.* ii. 11.
[4] *Ibid.* ii. 23.

however, at Monte Cassino, but, on the night before the day appointed, appeared in a dream to both the abbat and the prior, and gave them minute directions concerning the new building.[1]

Visions of the souls of persons just dead were not uncommon. "Many of our time," writes Gregory, "whose spiritual sight is purified by undefiled faith and frequent prayer, have often seen souls departing from the body."[2] Thus Benedict beheld the soul of his sister Scholastica depart in the form of a dove,[3] and that of Germanus bishop of Capua carried to heaven by angels in a globe of fire[4]; Gregorius, a monk at Terracina, beheld the soul of his brother Speciosus, when the latter died at Capua[5]; some people sailing between Sicily and Naples saw the soul of a certain recluse carried up to heaven[6]; some monks in a monastery six miles from Norcia saw the soul of their dying abbat fly from his mouth in the form of a dove[7]; a hermit saw the soul of King Theodoric thrown down a crater at Lipari.[8]

Most common of all, however, were visions vouchsafed to persons who were either destined to die or who were actually dying, and also to those who watched round the beds of the dying. These visions, however, are of too conventional a character to claim our attention here. Warnings of death are delivered sometimes by voices,[9] sometimes by apparitions of the dead or of saints,[10] in one instance by a vision of the Virgin Mary.[11] One young monk of Portus received intimation of

[1] *Dial.* ii. 22. On this Gregory comments: "Liquet profecto, quia mobilioris naturae est spiritus quam corpus. Et certe Scriptura teste novimus quod propheta ex Iudaea sublevatus (Dan. xiv. 32), repente est cum prandio in Chaldaea depositus, quo videlicet prandio prophetam refecit, seque repente in Iudaea iterum invenit. Si igitur tam longe Habacuc potuit sub momento corporaliter ire et prandium deferre, quid mirum si Benedictus Pater obtinuit quatenus iret per spiritum, et fratrum quiescentium spiritibus necessaria narraret, ut sicut ille ad cibum corporis corporaliter perrexit, ita iste ad institutionem spiritalis vitae spiritaliter pergeret?"

[2] *Ibid.* iv. 7. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 34. [4] *Ibid.* ii. 35.

[5] *Ibid.* iv. 8. [6] *Ibid.* iv. 9.

[7] *Ibid.* iv. 10. For this phenomenon, compare the *S. Gallen Life* c. 17: "Fertur a videntibus, quod huius viri (sc. Paulini) anima in cuiusdam magnae, qualis est cignus, alba specie avis, satisque pulchra, quando moritur migrasset ad coelum."

[8] *Ibid.* iv. 30. [9] *Ibid.* i. 8; iv. 47. [10] *Ibid.* iv. 16, 26.

[11] *Ibid.* iv. 17.

his approaching decease by seeing his own name written in letters of gold.[1] Another monk of St. Andrew's, in Rome, was warned by a vision of a crown of white flowers.[2] The death-bed visions are all of the same general type. The dying wrestle with dragons,[3] or with black men of frightful aspect[4]; they receive visits from angels,[5] or saints clad in white,[6] or from the Saviour[7]; heavenly music sounds,[8] and fragrant odours fill the chamber with perfume.[9] Sometimes their dying senses perceive what is happening in other parts of the world,[10] or in the realm of spirits which they are about to enter.[11] We may read the same things *ad nauseam* in all the lives of the saints. We will, therefore, linger no longer over these stories of visions, but will pass on to the second kind of stories related in the *Dialogues*, the stories of prophecies.

(*b*) Stories of *Prophecies*. Of these prophecies we may distinguish two kinds—those uttered by the dying, and those uttered by saints. Of the first kind Gregory writes: "Sometimes the soul itself, by reason of its subtle nature, foresees somewhat of the future; sometimes souls before their departure attain by revelation to the knowledge of things to come; sometimes when they are on the point of quitting the body, by heavenly inspiration they penetrate with the spiritual eye the secrets of heaven."[12] Thus a Roman advocate knew on his death-bed that he would be buried in the Church of St. Xystus, and a dying servant foretold the names of all in the house who were going to die[13]; a count of Civitavecchia, named Theophanius, foretold that a storm which was raging would cease for his funeral[14]; Cerbonius bishop of Populonia predicted that those who buried him would receive no hurt from the Lombards.[15] The prophecies uttered by saints are more interesting. Sometimes, indeed, they refer to trifling events, as when Equitius of Valeria prophesied that he would not be allowed to obey a summons to Rome,[16] or when Bishop Boniface foretold that his nephew would never succeed him in the episcopate.[17] But occasionally they are of greater moment. Constantius bishop of

[1] *Dial.* iv. 26.
[2] *Ibid.* iv. 47.
[3] *Ibid.* iv. 38.
[4] *Ibid.* iv. 18, 38.
[5] *Ibid.* iv. 15, 19.
[6] *Ibid.* iv. 11, 12, 13, 34.
[7] *Ibid.* iv. 16.
[8] *Ibid.* iv. 14, 15.
[9] *Ibid.* iv. 14, 15, 16.
[10] *Ibid.* iv. 35.
[11] *Ibid.* iv. 31, 36.
[12] *Ibid.* iv. 26.
[13] *Ibid.* iv. 26.
[14] *Ibid.* iv. 27.
[15] *Ibid.* iii. 11.
[16] *Ibid.* i. 4.
[17] *Ibid.* i. 9.

Aquino was asked on his death-bed who would succeed him. He replied, "After Constantius a muleteer, after a muleteer a fuller. Alas for thee, my city! thou hast yet this to endure." When he died, Andrew was made bishop, who had once been employed in the stables; and after him came Jovinus, a fuller. Meanwhile Aquino had been so wasted with war and pestilence that, on the decease of Jovinus, no other bishop was elected.[1]

By far the most remarkable of the prophecies, however, are attributed to St. Benedict. Three of these are extremely interesting. One was addressed to the Gothic king, Totila, and it ran as follows:—

> "Much evil doest thou;
> Much evil hast thou done;
> At least now give over thine iniquity.
> Verily into Rome shalt thou enter;
> Thou shalt cross the sea;
> Nine years shalt thou reign, and die the tenth."[2]

The second is the famous prediction about the fate of Rome. Said Benedict to the Bishop of Canosa, "Rome shall never be destroyed by the Gentiles, but shall be so shaken by tempests and lightnings, by whirlwinds and earthquakes, that it will decay of itself." "The mysteries of this prophecy," comments Gregory, "we now behold as clear as day, for in this city we see the walls demolished, houses overturned, churches destroyed by tempestuous winds, and buildings rotten with old age decaying and falling into ruin."[3] The third great prediction of Benedict concerns the fate of the Monastery of Monte Cassino: "All this monastery which I have built, with whatsoever I have prepared for my brethren, are by the judgment of Almighty God delivered over to the heathen; and I could scarce obtain the lives of those in this place." The words were fulfilled when, in 589, Duke Zotto and his Lombards pillaged and burned the monastery, the monks, however, escaping in safety to Rome.[4]

In criticizing these stories of prophecy I need only make one remark. It was natural and easy to attribute a power of foretelling future events to holy men, particularly when, as in the

[1] *Dial.* iii. 8.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. 15.
[3] *Ibid.* ii. 15.
[4] *Ibid.* ii. 17.

case of Benedict, they seem really to have possessed a kind of "second sight."[1] It is to be observed, however, that, with two exceptions, all the alleged prophecies recorded by Gregory had been already fulfilled when he wrote. Of these two exceptions, one was a prophecy of the end of the world,[2] the other the prediction of Benedict about the destruction of Rome[3]—a prediction which certainly represented accurately the fate of Rome up to the time of Gregory, but which the history of the later centuries has falsified. These two prophecies are the only ones which it is possible to test, and the test proves them to be nothing better than wrong guesses. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to suppose that the other tales of prophecies fulfilled were mostly legends which grew up after the events which are said to have been prophesied. At any rate, in the absence of proof as to the genuineness of the prediction, such an explanation is the most intelligible.

(*c*) Stories of *Miracles*.[4] The miracles related by Gregory are, on the whole, less striking than the visions. A great number of them are merely the usual stories, such as we get repeated over and over again in monastic biographies. We have here the oft-told tales of fish miraculously supplied to an ascetic on a fast-day[5]; of great rocks arrested or removed by prayer[6]; of a saint rendered invisible to his enemies[7]; of poison made innocuous by the sign of the cross[8]; of lamps lighted without hands or burning without oil[9]; of wild beasts, birds, and reptiles gifted with miraculous intelligence[10]; of glass and crockery smashed and made whole[11]; of provisions miraculously provided or increased[12]; of raging fires stayed[13]; of sick persons and animals healed[14]; of dead bodies raised to life[15] or

[1] See, *e.g.*, *Dial.* ii. 7, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20. Dr. Hodgkin (*Italy and her Invaders* iv. p. 431) writes: "Whatever among the miracles attributed to the founder of Cassino we may feel bound to reject, we can hardly refuse to him an extraordinary, perhaps a supernatural, power of reading the human heart."

[2] *Dial.* iii. 38. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 15.

[4] For Gregory's doctrine of miracles, see below, Book III. Part I. § 4 *ad fin.*

[5] *Ibid.* i. 1. [6] *Ibid.* i. 1, 7; ii. 9. [7] *Ibid.* i. 2.

[8] *Ibid.* iii. 5. [9] *Ibid.* i. 5; iii. 30.

[10] *Ibid.* i. 2, 3, 9; ii. 8; iii. 2, 11, 15. [11] *Ibid.* i. 7; ii. 1.

[12] *Ibid.* i. 7, 9; ii. 21, 29. [13] *Ibid.* i. 6; iii. 18.

[14] *Ibid.* i. 4, 10; ii. 11, 26; iii. 3. [15] *Ibid*, i. 2, 10, 12; ii. 32; iii. 17.

miraculously preserved,[1] or singing,[2] or moving,[3] or undergoing unnatural transformation in the tomb[4]; of springs produced by prayer, and rivers altering their courses[5]; of "second sight"[6]; of the casting out of devils.[7] The compilers of miraculous histories had no great imagination, and they were mostly content to embroider on a few well-worn themes. The anecdotes of Gregory, at any rate, are not very original. I will, however, give one or two of the best of them as samples.

The gardener of a monastery, finding that a thief stole his vegetables, set a snake to watch the place in the hedge where the thief was wont to break in, saying, "In the name of Jesus I bid you keep this passage and suffer no thief to enter." The snake stretched itself obediently across the way, and the monk then returned to his cell. Presently, when the brethren were all taking their midday siesta, the thief came; but just as he was climbing in, he caught sight of the snake. In his fear he fell back, and his shoe catching in a stake, he was hung up head downwards, without any means of extricating himself from his position. The snake meanwhile continued to watch him until the gardener returned and dismissed it from the duty.[8]

The next story taken from the Life of Benedict is somewhat curious. One day at Subiaco, the little monk Placidus, the future Apostle of his Order in Sicily, went to the lake to draw water, but overbalanced himself and fell in. Benedict, who was sitting in his cell, was supernaturally aware of the occurrence, and cried out hastily to his disciple Maurus: "Run, Brother Maurus, for the child who went to fetch water has fallen into the lake, and the stream has carried him a great way." Maurus ran down to the edge of the lake, and then, "thinking still that he went upon dry land, he ran upon the water," caught the drifting boy by the hair and brought him safely back. It was only when he stood again on the firm ground that Maurus realized that a miracle had taken place, and "much astonished, he wondered how he had done that which knowingly he would

[1] *Dial.* iii. 13.
[2] *Ibid.* iv. 21.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 23.
[4] *Ibid.* iii. 13.
[5] *Ibid.* ii. 5; iii. 9, 10, 16.
[6] *Ibid.* i. 4; ii. 7, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20; iii. 14, 26.
[7] *Ibid.* i. 10; ii. 4, 16; iii. 6, 14, 21, 25.
[8] *Ibid.* i. 3.

not have dared to venture." He therefore imputed the miracle to the virtue of Benedict, while Benedict on his side attributed it to Maurus's prompt obedience. The friendly contention in humility was finally settled in favour of Benedict by a declaration of Placidus: "When I was drawn out of the water I thought I saw my abbat's garments over my head, and imagined that it was he who drew me out."[1]

Boniface, a bishop "in ea civitate quae Ferentis dicitur," was very poor, his whole revenue being derived from a single vineyard. But as he was very charitable, he could never bring himself to deny a poor man who asked for alms. Now, there lived in the same house with him an ambitious priest named Constantius, who was nephew to the bishop, and desired to become his successor. This man, in order to get money to help him in his future candidature, had sold his horse for twelve gold crowns, which he kept locked up in his chest. One day, when Constantius was away, some poor people came to beg of Bishop Boniface, who, having nothing of his own to give them, went to his nephew's chest, forced the lock "with pious violence," and distributed the crowns among the beggars. Later on Constantius returned, and, finding his money gone, bitterly reproached his uncle. "All can live comfortably here except me," cried he. He raised such a din that all the household ran to his room. The good bishop tried to soothe him, but he only became the more abusive, shouting out, "Every one can live with you except me. Give me back my money!" At last the bishop, in great grief, went to St. Mary's Church, and, holding his vestment in his outstretched hands, he prayed to the Virgin to give him some money to quiet the frantic priest. Casting down his eyes upon his vestment, he suddenly found in it twelve golden crowns "as bright as if they had come that hour from the mint." These, therefore, he took, and flinging them down before his nephew, he said, "There is your money that you have made such a stir about. But know that, for your covetousness, you shall never after my death be bishop of this place." The story adds that the bishop's words came true, and Constantius remained a presbyter to the end of his life.[2]

[1] *Dial.* ii. 7. For another case in which a doubt was raised as to the person to whom a miracle should be attributed, see *ibid.* i. 2.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 9. This is the only instance in the *Dialogues* of an invocation

Two monks of Valeria were hung by the Lombards from the branches of one tree. When evening was come, the souls of both began to sing most clearly and distinctly, so that both the Lombards themselves and many captives in the place heard the music.[1]

In the time of Ambrose there lived in Piacenza a bishop named Sabinus, a man of wonderful virtue. One day he was informed by his deacon that the river Po had overflowed its banks and flooded the Church lands. The bishop said, "Go and say to the river, 'The bishop commands you to retire and keep within your bounds.'" But the deacon burst out laughing, and would not obey. Then Sabinus summoned a notary and dictated the following letter: "Sabinus, servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, sendeth warning to the Po. I command thee, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou exceed not thy channel in such and such places, nor presume any more to damage the lands of the Church." This missive was flung into the stream by the notary, and the river at once retired from the estates mentioned.[2] A somewhat similar story is told of Frigdianus bishop of Lucca. The river Serchio, which flowed near the town, was constantly doing damage by its floods, and the inhabitants failed in their efforts to divert its course. At last the bishop took a little rake to the bank of the river, and, after praying to God, he ordered the river to follow the channel he marked out with the rake. The Serchio obeyed, and never afterwards flowed in its old bed.[3]

A priest of Valeria, named Stephen, returning one day from a journey, said carelessly to his servant, "Come, you devil, take off my stockings." Immediately invisible hands began to unloose his garters. The priest, in great terror, cried out, "Away, foul spirit, away! I spoke not to thee, but to my servant." So the devil departed, leaving the garters half untied.

of the Virgin. In one other story alone is Mary mentioned, viz. that of the vision of Musa (*Dial.* iv. 17). Our evidence seems to show that the cult of the Virgin at this period was more flourishing outside of Rome. In Constantinople it was certainly already popular; while in Gaul the legend of the bodily assumption of the Virgin was current, being related for the first time in Western literature by Greg. Tur. *Mirac.* i. 4. In *Epp.* ix. 195 we read of "a picture of the Mother of our Lord and God" being placed in a synagogue in Sardinia by a converted Jew.

[1] *Dial.* iv. 21. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 10. [3] *Ibid.* iii. 9.

"Whence we may learn," Gregory moralizes, "that if the old enemy is so ready in things pertaining to our body, he is yet more eager in watching the thoughts of our hearts."[1]

Florentius of Norcia once found his cell beset by innumerable snakes. He prayed to God to relieve him of the pest; whereupon it thundered, and every snake was killed. Then the poor hermit prayed again, "Behold, Lord, Thou hast killed them all; but who is to carry them away?" Scarcely had he spoken when a flock of birds flew up, and each bird bore away a serpent in its beak, leaving the hermitage quite clear.[2]

The last anecdote I shall quote illustrates the popular opinion as to the danger of offending a man of sanctity. Some Goths, who were journeying to Ravenna, once kidnapped two little boys from a place in the neighbourhood of Todi. When Fortunatus, the bishop of that place, heard of it, he sent for the Goths, and addressing them with courtesy asked them to name any sum they chose as a ransom, and to restore the children. But the leader replied, "Anything else you ask we will do, but we will on no account restore the boys." The bishop then insinuated a threat: "You grieve me, my son, for that you do not listen to your father; do not grieve me, lest you suffer for it." But the Goth only repeated his refusal and went off. The next day the bishop renewed his entreaties, with no better success; and when the barbarian left his presence exclaimed, "I know that you will suffer for leaving me thus in grief." However, the Goth gave no heed to the warning, but sent the children on with his men, and himself mounted and rode after. But before he had passed the city wall, by St. Peter's Church, he was thrown from his horse and broke his hip-bone. Being carried back to the inn, he sent in haste to recall the children, whom he ordered to be taken to Fortunatus with the message: "Behold, you have cursed me and I am punished; receive the children whom you asked for, and intercede for me." Fortunatus then relented, and the Goth was healed by a sprinkling of holy water.[3]

The miracles of the *Dialogues* are of great interest to a student of the supernatural, because at first sight they seem to be extremely well attested. To begin with, they were related of people who had been living within the century, and whose lives

[1] *Dial.* iii. 20. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 15. [3] *Ibid.* i. 10.

and actions, therefore, were still remembered by many. A false story, then, might easily have been detected. Again, they were related by people who were still living, were well known, and were, in many instances, eye-witnesses of the events recorded. The names of these authorities are given in full by Gregory, and in the great majority of cases they are names of persons whom we cannot for a moment suspect of deliberate fraud.[1] Again, there are indications that Gregory himself did not rashly accept every miraculous tale he heard, but made some attempt to sift and investigate. He reports in the *Dialogues* only such tales as he had reason to believe were true.

The evidence for the miracula, then, seems at first sight fairly strong. But if we look into it a little more closely, we shall find that it is not so good as it appears.

First, it would be a great mistake to suppose that in the sixth century a few years would be insufficient to permit a legend to grow up round the name of a saint, or that such a legend would be at all likely to be confuted or shown up. The contrary was the case. The minds of the people of this period were predisposed in favour of the miraculous. Not only was every unusual phenomenon at once attributed to supernatural agency, but even ordinary events were explained on a supernatural hypothesis, if there was the slightest excuse for doing so. The age, immersed in theology, judged everything by the theological standard; the theological explanation of things seemed more credible, more simple, more (if I may so say) natural, than any explanation that the science of the time could offer. Hence miraculous accounts were neither softened down nor explained away. They were entirely in harmony with the prevailing habits of thought, with the prevailing

[1] The miracles of St. Benedict are exceptionally well attested. Gregory writes: "Huius (sc. Benedicti) ego omnia gesta non didici, sed pauca quae narro, quatuor discipulis illius referentibus agnovi: Constantino scilicet reverentissimo valde viro, qui ei in monasterii regimine successit; Valentiniano quoque, qui annis multis Lateranensi monasterio praefuit; Simplicio, qui congregationem illius post eum tertius rexit; Honorato etiam, qui nunc adhuc cellae eius, in qua prius conversatus fuerat, praeest" (*Dial.* ii. Proleg.). So again for the miracles of Nonnosus (*ibid.* i. 7) the principal authority is Maximianus bishop of Syracuse, to whom Gregory applied by letter for details (Greg. *Epp.* iii. 50). Cf. *Dial.* i. Proleg.: "Ut dubitationis occasionem legentibus subtraham, per singula quae describo, quibus haec auctoribus mihi comperta sint manifesto," etc.

conception of human experience. The wonder to the men of this time was, not that a saint should work miracles, but that he should not do so. Any miraculous account, therefore, was accepted almost without question as perfectly credible, probable, and even ordinary.

Secondly, the authorities quoted by Gregory cannot be regarded as having much weight. In some few instances, indeed, we may be justified even in suspecting them of deliberate falsehood. Take, for example, the case of Gregory's informant concerning the miracles of Fortunatus of Todi. "A certain poor old man was brought to me—because I always love to talk with such men—of whom I inquired his country, and hearing that he was of the city of Todi, I asked him whether he knew Bishop Fortunatus. He said he knew him very well. "Then I beseech you," said I, "tell me whether you know of any miracles that he did, and, since I am very desirous to know, explain to me what manner of man he was." In reply to this leading question, the poor old man related a miraculous story. Gregory continues: "When the old man had told me this strange story, he was ready to proceed to others, but as I was at that time to preach to some who expected me, and the day was far spent, I could not then hear any more of the acts of the venerable Fortunatus. And yet if I could, I would never do anything else than listen to such excellent stories."[1] We cannot here help suspecting that the unnamed poor old man, finding the great Bishop so eager to listen to his recital, thought it no harm to draw a little on his imagination, and we are not the least astonished when we find that on the next day he had a yet more marvellous tale to pour into the ears of his interested patron. It may be admitted, however, that in the great majority of cases the authorities spoke in good faith. It is quite incredible that distinguished bishops, abbats, clergy, and monks should have all conspired to invent fables to deceive the credulous Pope. Yet even if we grant that Gregory's informants were men of good character and position, even if we grant that they had opportunities for personal observation or for collecting evidence from those who had observed, we have, nevertheless, no means of judging how far they possessed the power of accurate observation, or of reporting accurately what

[1] *Dial.* i. 10.

they had observed or collected without drawing inferences of their own, and without adding any supplement or interpolation. An unusual event inaccurately observed might easily be regarded as a miracle, and if, in addition to this, it was carelessly reported, its miraculous character might easily be emphasized. Now, when we remember that these informants were predisposed to detect the miraculous in the most ordinary events, and moreover, that in many cases the miracles they related were attributed to saints whose disciples they had been and whose memory they wished to glorify, we cannot help regarding their evidence with grave suspicion. At any rate, we have at this time no means of testing it. The most we can say is that Gregory himself regarded it as sufficient.

And this leads me to remark, thirdly, that Gregory is not at all to be trusted as a critic of evidence. It is quite true that he did investigate to some extent the histories related to him, and satisfied himself, at any rate, of their truth. But what satisfied Gregory does not by any means satisfy us. He tells us that he felt bound to believe the stories of his revered and pious elders as certainly as if he had seen the events related with his own eyes[1]; and again he says that he learnt certain things "from the relation of such very religious persons, that I cannot have any doubt whatever of the truth."[2] Now this means that Gregory was satisfied if he was assured of the good character of his informant. He looked, not to mental, but to moral qualities as the guarantee of truth. If the witness was honest, Gregory was content to believe him trustworthy. This moral criterion, however, is, of course, insufficient, and it is quite certain that Gregory, by relying upon it, was betrayed into serious errors.

[1] *Dial.* iii. 1. It may be remarked that Gregory, although professing to have had a "miracle" wrought upon himself (*ibid.* iii. 33), does not claim to have witnessed miracles wrought on others. Gregory of Tours, on the other hand, asserts that he has not only seen many who had been the subjects of "miracles" (*Glor. Conf.* 33, 36, 103), but that he even witnessed some "miracles" in the working. See *De Mir. S. Martini* ii. 25, and compare *Glor. Confess.* 40, 66. Greg. Tur. had himself received "miraculous" relief (*De Mir. S. M.* ii. 60; iii. 1).

[2] *Dial.* iii. 1: "Nunc ad miracula exteriora veniamus, quae et multis iam nota sunt, et ego tam religiosorum virorum relatione didici, ut de his omnimodo ambigere non possim." Cf. *ibid.* iii. 14: "Narrante Eleutherio, qui et hunc familiariter noverat et eius verbis vita fidem praebebat;" *ibid.* iii. 15: "De cuius verbis ipse non dubitas, quia eius vitam fidemque minime ignoras."

Of the many miraculous stories recorded in the *Dialogues*, only three can be tested by independent evidence. And of these three, the first, as it now stands, is entirely unhistorical; the second relates inaccurately an event which, as is now acknowledged, was not necessarily miraculous; while the third introduces into history a supernatural element, which is noticeably absent in the accounts of the best authorities.

The first is the celebrated story of Paulinus of Nola.[1] It relates that when the Vandals devastated Campania, they carried off, among other captives, the son of a poor widow. Paulinus, to whom the widow came for help, could give no money to redeem the son; but, in lieu of that, he went himself to Africa, and voluntarily took the man's place as slave to the son-in-law of the Vandal king. When by a miraculous circumstance his true position was discovered, he was honourably sent back to Italy, and carried with him all the captives of his own city, who were set at liberty at his request. It is a charming tale of humility and self-devotion, but unhappily it all turns on the supposition that in the time of Paulinus the Vandals devastated Campania, and carried off their captives to Africa; whereas, in fact, the Vandal invasion of Italy did not take place till nearly twenty years after Paulinus's death. A desperate attempt has been made to save the credit of the story by supposing that by "Vandals" Gregory meant "Goths." But in that case the details of the narrative would be obviously incorrect. It would be a less violent hypothesis to believe that in the time of the Vandals some one named Paulinus actually did what Paulinus of Nola is said to have done, and that in after-times the story got transferred from this unknown person to his more celebrated namesake. In any case, it is certain that Gregory made a serious mistake, which, by a little care, he might easily have avoided.

The second story relates how certain African Catholics were able to speak after their tongues had been cut out[2]—a fact, the truth of which is now universally admitted, but which, it has

[1] *Dial.* iii. 1.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 32. Compare the references in Theophrastus (Migne *P. G.* lxxxv. 1000); Justinian *Codex* i. 27; Marcellinus *Chron.* (Migne *P. L.* li. 933); Procop. *Bell. Vand.* i. 8; Victor Vitensis *De Pers. Vand.* v. 6 (Migne *P. L.* lviii. See Ruinart's note, *ibid.* p. 391 *sqq.*); Victor Tununensis *Chron.* Migne *P. L.* lxviii. 946). See also note in Milman's *Lat. Chr.* i. p. 424.

been convincingly shown, can be referred to a natural cause. In his narrative Gregory makes the extraordinary mistake of placing the event in the reign of Justinian, and in the details he differs considerably from the accounts of those who were contemporaries. He seems to have picked up the story casually at Constantinople, and to have committed it to writing without even taking the trouble to test it by reference to the original authorities.

Thirdly, the account which Gregory gives of "the martyrdom" of Hermenigild cannot be credited for a moment in view of the silence of the Spanish historians, and the glaring inaccuracies of the narrative itself.[1] It is pure fiction.

It is clear, then, from these three cases—the only ones which admit of being tested—that Gregory was often content to accept the evidence of persons whom he thought he could trust, without taking pains to verify and confirm their assertions. It may further be shown without difficulty that even in cases where he had an opportunity of personally investigating the miraculous powers accredited to saints, he was perfectly satisfied with the scantiest and most inadequate amount of proof. I am led to this conclusion by two instances in the *Dialogues*. (1) Gregory, as he believed, was enabled to fast on Easter Eve in consequence of the prayers of Eleutherius. Few people would consider this circumstance a proof that Eleutherius could raise the dead. Yet to Gregory it was: "Thus I proved by my own experience that he had really done the acts of which I was not myself an eye-witness."[2] (2) In the diocese of Tivoli, a wild and mountainous district, there lived a presbyter, Amantius, of whom wonderful tales were told. Like the Apostles, he laid his hands upon the sick, and the diseases, however severe, disappeared at his touch. The forest serpents, when he made the sign of the cross over them, died at once. If a snake fled into a hole, he made the sign of the cross over the hole, and immediately the snake came out already dead. Of these miraculous powers Gregory wished to have a proof: he accordingly sent for Amantius, and placed him in a hospital where there were many patients. In this hospital the presbyter remained some days, and on one night, by prayer and laying-on of

[1] *Dial.* iii. 31. For a criticism of this legend, see below, pp. 406, 407.
[2] *Ibid.* iii. 33.

hands, he succeeded in calming the phrenzy of a patient who was deranged. Now, if an English clergyman with such a reputation for miraculous powers were placed for some days in a London hospital, and in that time only succeeded in quieting one lunatic, his pretensions, to say the least, would be somewhat discredited. But that was not the way that Gregory and his contemporaries judged. "From this one act of his," says Gregory, "I learnt to believe all the stories I had heard of him."[1]

My conclusion is that Gregory had no capacity either for weighing and testing evidence brought forward by others, or for drawing correct inferences from what fell within his personal observation. Further, since Gregory was certainly the most intelligent Roman of his age, it is safe to attribute a similar or even greater incapacity to the original authorities he quotes. Hence I can only regard the supernatural stories, which proceed, either from Gregory himself or from these authorities, with the gravest suspicion. And it certainly does not lessen that suspicion to note that of all the many miracles recorded in the *Dialogues*, hardly any were performed in Rome. Gregory does indeed say, "If I should attempt to relate all that I have known happen at St. Peter's Church, I should have no time to speak of anything else."[2] But the only Roman miracles he actually records are the healing of the lunatic by Amantius, and the healing of a paralytic girl by a sacristan of St. Peter's, named Acontius.[3] Thus we are asked to believe that in all parts about the city monks and abbats and presbyters and bishops were performing innumerable marvels, but that in Rome itself, the sacred city, either no miracles to speak of were performed, or those which were performed were not of sufficient interest or importance for Gregory to note them down. This is indeed strange; and all the more so because, as soon as eminent Romans left Rome and got to a distance, they are reported to have worked miracles (*e.g.* Pope John healed a blind man at Constantinople,[4] and Pope Agapetus healed one who was dumb and lame in Greece[5]); and further, because directly we pass from the subject of miracles to that of visions, nearly one half, and certainly the most beautiful of those recorded, are

[1] *Dial.* iii. 35. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 25. [3] *Ibid.* iii. 25.
[4] *Ibid.* iii. 2. [5] *Ibid.* iii. 3.

ascribed to persons living in Rome. It certainly looks as though the miracle stories could not bear the light of investigation by one upon the spot, even when that one was by nature so ready to believe as Gregory.

With the modern reader, then, the legends of the *Dialogues* will scarcely pass as strict records of fact. They are, however, of great historical interest, as faithfully reflecting the customs, manners, and beliefs of the Italians of Gregory's day. Just as Boccaccio's *Decameron* mirrors the life of the fourteenth century, so the *Dialogues* reveal the life of the sixth—the life of Italian peasants, monks, and bishops in the villages and small episcopal towns, as well as the life of the citizens of Rome. From this point of view the book is a most valuable source of information on the period; second, indeed, to none save the collection of Gregory's letters. It is a magazine full of curious matter, which well repays investigation. Here, however, I can but touch on a few points of interest, which throw some light on the life and manners of the Gregorian age.

The country, according to the representation in the *Dialogues*, had for long been in a very disturbed and unsettled condition. First the Goths, and then the Lombards, had devastated the rural districts. Barbarians in bands or else in twos and threes roamed about, pillaging or murdering all who were not strong enough to resist them. The roads were unsafe, and unprotected travellers were in danger of being robbed.[1] Children were kidnapped and carried off, even from the midst of towns.[2] Sometimes towns themselves, such as Aquino or Populonia, were ravaged.[3] Monasteries which were reputed wealthy were frequently attacked, the monks being either killed or put to the torture.[4] Gregory represents both Goths and Lombards as persecutors. The latter, on one occasion, murdered forty peasants, because they refused to eat meats sacrificed to pagan gods[5]; on another, slew four hundred people who would not adore the goat's head, which the Lombards, "according to their custom, sacrificed to the devil, running round it in circles, and dedicating it with blasphemous songs"[6]; on another, hung up two monks on one tree,[7] and again beheaded a deacon.[8]

[1] *Dial.* i. 2.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 10.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 8, 11.
[4] *Ibid.* i. 4; iv. 22.
[5] *Ibid.* iii. 27.
[6] *Ibid.* iii. 28.
[7] *Ibid.* iv. 21.
[8] *Ibid.* iv. 23.

Sometimes, however, they were on friendly terms with Catholics, as *e.g.* with Sanctulus of Norcia, to whom they presented all the captives they had taken.[1] In Spoleto, it seems, the principal church remained in the possession of the Catholics, and when a bishop of the Lombards, an Arian, endeavoured to seize it by violence, he was struck with blindness in punishment of his daring.[2]

Besides the barbarian soldiers, the country was infested with thieves and beggars. The attention of these people was particularly directed to the monasteries, and there are some amusing stories in the *Dialogues* which relate how they were themselves occasionally trapped. Thus some thieves once broke into the garden of the monastery of Isaac the Syrian, but found themselves compelled by a supernatural impulse to work hard at digging the whole of the night. In the morning the abbat came out, and, with a twinkle in his eye, said to the perspiring burglars: "Rejoice, my brothers; you have worked well: now you may take a rest." He then gave them some breakfast, and sent them away with his blessing and a present of vegetables.[3] Some beggars, again, hoping to obtain clothing from the holy Isaac, hid most of their garments in a tree, and, after tearing and spoiling the rest, presented themselves at the convent in a miserable plight. The abbat, who knew of their doings, sent one of his monks quietly to fetch the clothes from the tree, and then presented them to the beggars, saying, "Ye are naked; come, take these garments and clothe yourselves." The men, recognizing their own things, went away in great confusion.[4]

The monasteries were the most prosperous institutions of the age—havens of refuge for the destitute and oppressed. When the monks were not being harried by the Lombards, they led a peaceful, and for the most part a happy life. We see them generally engaged in some kind of manual labour—tending their gardens,[5] mowing hay in the fields,[6] building walls,[7] baking bread,[8] gathering olives,[9] looking after the oratory, cleaning

[1] *Dial.* iii. 37. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 29.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 14. For other instances of thieves miraculously caught, see *ibid.* i. 3; iii. 22.
[4] *Ibid.* iii. 14. [5] *Ibid.* i. 3, 4; iii. 14. [6] *Ibid.* i. 4; ii. 32.
[7] *Ibid.* ii. 11. [8] *Ibid.* i. 11. [9] *Ibid.* i. 7.

the lamps,[1] and so on. In one case only do we find an instance of monks engaged in copying manuscripts.[2] Often people of high position withdrew into monasteries; serfs bound to the soil were not received until their landlord's permission was obtained.[3] We occasionally meet with bad communities, like that of Vicovaro[4]; but most of the monks in the *Dialogues* are estimable men. A feature of the monasteries was the garden, always carefully tended; many possessed their own oliveyards or vineyards. In bad years the brethren were sometimes sent out into the neighbouring oliveyards to gather fruit, being paid for their trouble with a little of the oil. But this expedient was rarely resorted to, as it was thought to be unsettling to the monks.[5]

The power of the abbat, even over the officials of the monastery, was absolute. We read, for instance, of one abbat of Fondi who lost his temper with his prior, and fell to beating him, first with his fists, and afterwards, since a rod was not handy, with a footstool. Though the prior was knocked about until he was black and blue, he made no remonstrance, but when the abbat had finished, went quietly to bed. The next day, when his bruises were noticed, he merely said, "Yesterday, for my sins, I came in contact with a footstool, and got the injury you see."[6]

The rule of poverty was, of course, strictly observed,[7] and excessive abstinence was regarded as a merit. Sometimes, however, monks obtained an undeserved reputation for austerities. In the monastery of the Galatians at Iconium there dwelt one who was renowned for fasting. When he was dying, the brethren assembled round his bed, expecting to hear something edifying from so good a man. But to their astonishment he said, "While you thought I was fasting with you, I was really eating in secret, and so now I am given up to be devoured by a dragon."[8] To eat on the great fasts was held to be a sin.[9] Good men, moreover, were expected to look pale and ascetic. There is a droll anecdote of Cassius bishop of Narni, who had the misfortune to be high-coloured in face. When Totila saw him he

[1] *Dial.* i. 7. [2] *Ibid.* i. 4. [3] *Ibid.* i. 1.
[4] *Ibid.* ii. 3. [5] *Ibid.* i. 7.
[6] *Ibid.* i. 2. For another bad abbat, see *ibid.* i. 7.
[7] *Ibid.* iii. 14; iv. 55. [8] *Ibid.* iv. 38. [9] *Ibid.* iii. 33.

at once concluded that he was a drunkard, and despised him accordingly. It needed a miracle to vindicate the poor bishop's reputation.[1]

Some of these monks were brave men. An abbat of Sora, being warned by fugitives that the Lombards were coming, at once distributed among them everything the monastery contained, even to the contents of the garden. When the barbarians arrived and demanded treasure, he was able to say with truth that he had absolutely nothing to give them. The courageous abbot paid for his temerity with his life. He was taken to a wooded hill and cut down with a sword. When the body fell, it was said "the mountain and wood were shaken, as though the earth could not bear the weight of his holiness."[2]

We have a delightful sketch of Equitius, the preaching abbat of Valeria. He had such a zeal for saving souls that he would travel up and down the country, visiting towns, villages, churches, and private houses, and trying by all means "to stir men's hearts to the love of the heavenly country." This ardent missionary presented a quaint and uncouth figure. His dress was so coarse and shabby, that many who did not know him disdained even to reply to his salutation. He rode upon the worst beast that could be found, with a halter for bridle, and for saddle a sheep's skin; on right and left hung leather bags stuffed with parchments of the Holy Scriptures. Everywhere he went "he opened the fountain of Scripture and watered men's souls with his sermons." But this queer evangelist had never received a licence to preach, and his growing fame filled the Roman clergy with jealousy. They went, therefore, to the Pope, and persuaded him to summon Equitius to Rome to give an account of his doctrine. So a certain Julian, who was afterwards made bishop of Sabinum, was despatched post-haste to bring Equitius with all honour to Rome. When this man arrived at the monastery, he found some "antiquarii" writing, who told him that the abbat was in the fields making hay. Julian, therefore, sent his servant—an intractable and bad-tempered fellow—to give notice of his arrival. He found a number of monks hard at work haymaking in the meadow, and he asked one of them disdainfully to point out the abbat. But so soon as he set eyes on Equitius his bad spirit was subdued,

[1] *Dial.* iii. 6. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 22.

and, trembling greatly, he bowed himself before him and embraced his knees, telling him that his master desired to speak with him. Equitius ordered him to carry up some of the hay for the horses, and, said he, "I will straightway come when I have despatched the little work that remains." Meanwhile Julian was chafing at the delay, and when he saw his servant returning alone laden with hay, he cried out angrily, "Man, what does this mean? I sent you to bring the abbat, and not to fetch provender for my horse." "Sir," replied the servant, "he will come to you by-and-by." Presently Equitius appeared in hob-nail shoes and mean apparel, carrying his scythe over his shoulder. The pompous Roman cleric despised him and prepared to greet him rudely; but even he, as the abbat drew nearer, experienced the compelling influence of his holy personality, and, stammering out his message, he fell on his knees and begged the good man's prayers.[1]

Besides the congregations of monks and nuns who lived a common life in monasteries, we read of "religious," both male and female, who lived separately, under a monastic rule and wearing the monastic dress, but either in their own houses or in some private cell. Thus in Spoleto a nobleman's daughter insisted on adopting the religious life, for which cause she was disinherited by her father, who cut her off with half of one small estate. Many noble girls joined her, however, and dedicated themselves to virginity.[2] Gregory's own three aunts lived a monastic life in their own house in Rome[3]; three other women resided in a house near the Church of St. Mary Major[4]; Gregory's mother had a cell near the Basilica of St. Paul.[5] Male hermits generally took up their residence in caves and solitary places, from which they rarely issued, save sometimes to go and worship at St. Peter's tomb in Rome.[6] Some of these men bore themselves in a very eccentric fashion. One in Campania, named Martin, fastened himself to the wall of his cell with an iron chain, so that he could never move further than the length of the chain. When great St. Benedict heard of this he sent him a message: "If you are a servant of God, let not a chain of iron hold you, but the chain of

[1] *Dial.* i. 4.
[2] *Ibid.* iii. 21.
[3] *Ibid.* iv. 16; *Hom. in Ev.* 38.
[4] *Ibid.* iv. 15.
[5] Joh. Diac. *Vita* i. 9.
[6] *Ibid.* iii. 17.

Christ." Then Martin took off the chain, but he walked no further than he had been accustomed to when bound.[1] Many recluses had tame pets for company. Florentius of Norcia kept a bear—he used to call him "Brother Bear"—who daily led out the hermit's sheep to pasture, and brought them back at the hour his master named. One day, some monks who were jealous of the hermit's reputation, killed the bear; whereupon Florentius cursed them, saying, "I hope in Almighty God that they may, in this life and before the eyes of all, receive the reward of their malice, who have thus killed my bear that did them no harm." The four guilty monks were stricken with a horrible disease and died; and the repentant Florentius for the rest of his life bewailed himself as their murderer.[2]

A very strange figure is that of Isaac the Syrian. One day he suddenly appeared in Spoleto, entered the church, and asked leave of the sacristans to remain as long as he wished, without being turned out at closing time. He then commenced to pray, and continued thus all that day and all that night, and a second day and a second night, and a third day also. Then one of the sacristans, "filled with the spirit of pride," began to abuse him, calling him a hypocrite and impostor for showing himself in prayer for so great a length of time, and at last even struck him. At once the man was seized with a devil, who threw him down and forced him to cry out, "Isaac doth cast me forth." The saint, whose name was thus disclosed, expelled the spirit. Immediately the whole city was in an uproar. Men and women, nobles and peasants, rushed pell-mell to the church, trying to induce the holy man to come to their houses. Some offered him lands to build a monastery on, others offered money, others anything that they had. But Isaac refused them all, and, retiring a little distance from the city, he built a hermitage, Many others soon joined him and put themselves under his direction. To the end of his life, however, Isaac refused to accept gifts. "A monk who seeks for possessions," he was wont to say, "is not a monk." Gregory adds quaintly: "Although he was incomparably adorned with the virtue of abstinence, the contempt of worldly wealth, the spirit of prophecy and perseverance in prayer, yet he had one reprehensible trait, namely, that sometimes he would so exceed in mirth, that unless men

[1] *Dial.* iii. 16. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 15.

had known him to be full of virtue, they would never have believed it." [1]

This instance of popular enthusiasm for a holy man is by no means unique. A great deal of attention was paid to any one who had acquired a reputation for sanctity. The rich sent him presents and asked his prayers [2]; the poor were eager to do him little services.[3] Laymen, and even clerics, would travel long distances for the privilege of seeing him.[4] A humorous story is told of a saint named Constantius, who lived near Ancona, and served as sacristan in St. Stephen's Church. So great was the reputation of this holy man that people came from all parts of Italy to visit him. Among the rest came one day a simple countryman from a distant place. Arriving at St. Stephen's, he found a little tiny man of very insignificant appearance perched on some wooden steps and tending the church lamps. The bystanders assured the countryman that this was the great Constantius himself. But the foolish fellow could not for long believe that so celebrated a saint could look so insignificant. When at last he was convinced, he burst out laughing and cried, "I believed that he was a great big man, but that little creature has nothing of a man about him." Constantius, hearing his words, jumped down the steps and warmly embraced the boor. "You are the only man," said he, "who has his eyes open, and sees me as I am." [5]

The country-folk had a thorough belief in miraculous powers of such saintly personages. Sick persons, demoniacs, even ailing animals,[6] were brought to them to be cured. On one occasion a holy prior met a funeral. A mother was going to bury her son; but as soon as she caught sight of the "servant of God" she seized the bridle of his horse, saying, "You shall not leave me unless you raise up my son." [7] Another time two sisters came running to a bishop on Easter Eve, entreating him to come and restore their dead brother to life.[8] These greater miracles the saints are represented as performing with unwillingness on account of their humility: when humility was not preserved, there was a danger that the miracle would be undone. Thus Abbat Eleutherius of Spoleto was put to sleep

[1] *Dial.* iii. 14.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. 18; iii. 14, 26.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 16.
[4] *Ibid.* i. 5; iii. 15, 16, 21.
[5] *Ibid.* i. 5.
[6] *Ibid.* i. 10.
[7] *Ibid.* i. 2.
[8] *Ibid.* i. 10.

with a demoniac boy and healed him. But because the abbat boasted of his feat, the boy was again afflicted, and could only be healed by the united prayers of Eleutherius and the brethren.[1]

It was generally supposed that a saint continued to exhibit miraculous powers after death. St. Equitius of Valeria, after his decease, was thought to have defended his monks from the violence of the Lombards.[2] Bishop Fortunatus of Todi, says Gregory, "continues" to work miracles at his tomb, healing the sick and insane "as often as they ask in faith."[3] A dead presbyter of Valeria prevented the escape of a thief who had stolen a wether belonging to his Church.[4] A mad woman was healed in St. Benedict's cave.[5] A stocking of St. Honoratus was instrumental in restoring a dead man to life.[6] The coat of St. Eutychius of Norcia was carried through the fields in time of drought, and produced rain.[7]

It was a dangerous thing to offend a holy man even in the most trifling matters. Bishop Boniface, on the festival of St. Proculus the Martyr, went after mass to a nobleman's house to dine. Just as he was about to say grace, he was interrupted by a strolling player with an ape, who appeared at the door and began clashing his cymbals. The bishop, in great irritation at the noise, cried out, "Ah, ah! That wretch is a dead man! that wretch is a dead man! Here have I come to dinner, and I have not opened my lips to praise God, when that fellow with his ape must needs come and clash his cymbals." Then he said to the servants, "Go and give him meat and drink for charity; yet know that he is a dead man." The bishop then said grace and ate his dinner, and the player too was entertained; but when the latter was going out a stone fell from the roof of the house and wounded him so severely that he died the next day, "according to the saying of the man of God."[8]

The clergy of the period lived in a simple fashion, and were often extremely poor. One bishop, for example, derived his whole revenue from a small vineyard.[9] They seem, however, to have exercised a universal charity—affording relief, not only to the poor of their own dioceses, but to all passing travellers that demanded it.[10] Often they were men sprung

[1] *Dial.* iii. 32.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 4.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 10.
[4] *Ibid.* iii. 23.
[5] *Ibid.* ii. 38.
[6] *Ibid.* i. 2.
[7] *Ibid.* iii. 15.
[8] *Ibid.* i. 9.
[9] *Ibid.* i. 9.
[10] *Ibid.* i. 9, 10; iii. 11.

from the people, and we hear of a stableman and a fuller being made bishops.[1] Occasionally they had religious women living in their houses, and this was regarded as a great scandal.[2] There is one contrary case of a married presbyter, who "from the time of his ordination loved his wife (*presbyteram suam*) as a sister, but was on his guard against her as an enemy, and never allowed her on any pretext to approach him." When she came to visit him on his death-bed, he cried, "Depart from me, woman! There is still a little fire left: take away the straw!"[3] Many clerics showed unseemly eagerness to be promoted to bishoprics. We read of a presbyter who hoarded up money to secure his election[4]; of an archdeacon who in his impatience tried to poison the bishop.[5] A curious tale is told of a priest of Interocrina, who was engaged in pruning his vines when he was sent for to shrive a dying penitent. He delayed in order to finish what he was about, and meanwhile the man died. So great, however, was the presbyter's grief at this mischance, that the dead man was restored to life for eight days, that he might confess and perform suitable penance.[6]

The churches were cared for by sacristans (*mansionarii*),[7] who looked after the cleaning, saw to the lamps, kept the worshippers in order, and opened and closed the buildings at the proper times. The sacred edifices themselves were regarded with awe by the people, who were afraid to enter them after committing any great sin.[8] Alms were distributed in the porches,[9] and beggars had their stations there as in the present day.[10] The custom of burial within churches had begun, and the bishops often exacted money for the privilege.[11] Gregory says that to be buried in a church was good for those whose sins were not great, because their friends, seeing their tombs, were reminded to pray for them; it was perilous, however, for the bad, who were only punished the more for their presumption.[12] Martyrs appeared and ordered the bodies to be removed; foul spirits came and dragged them out by the feet; shrieks of agony were heard proceeding from the tomb, and the corpses mysteriously disappeared.[13]

[1] *Dial.* iii. 8. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 7. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 11. [4] *Ibid.* i. 9.
[5] *Ibid.* iii. 5. [6] *Ibid.* i. 12. [7] *Ibid.* i. 5; iii. 14, 24, 25.
[8] *Ibid.* iv. 32. [9] *Ibid.* iv. 37. [10] *Ibid.* iv. 14.
[11] *Ibid.* iv. 52. [12] *Ibid.* iv. 50. [13] *Ibid.* iv. 52–54.

The principal service was, of course, the Mass. Many stories are told to illustrate the efficacy of the Holy Oblation. Two nuns could not rest quiet in their tomb until it was offered on their behalf[1]; the body of a young monk of Monte Cassino was twice cast up from the grave, and only stayed in peace when the Host was laid upon the breast[2]; thirty masses delivered the soul of Justus from purgatory[3]; seven masses freed a spirit condemned to serve bathers in some sulphurous baths[4]; a prisoner was miraculously released from his chains on the days on which his wife at home had offered for him[5]; a sailor was saved from drowning on the day a bishop said mass on his behalf[6]; Pope Agapetus healed a dumb man by placing the Host in his mouth.[7] Altar-breads were sometimes given away by the clergy as a special favour.[8] The Viaticum was always brought to the dying when possible. The altar was regarded as peculiarly sacred, and a little dust from it is said to have been instrumental in restoring a dead man to life.[9]

The sign of the cross is frequently mentioned in the *Dialogues*. Loaves and cakes were marked with the cross.[10] Men signed themselves when they slept,[11] ate,[12] or drank.[13] A nun, wandering in the garden of her convent, plucked and ate a lettuce without first making the holy sign, and in consequence was possessed by a devil. At the exorcism which followed, the spirit cried out, "What have I done? What have I done? I was sitting upon a lettuce, and she came and ate me."[14] The sign of the cross was several times used in working miracles.[15] On one occasion holy water was employed.[16]

The belief in demoniacal agency was universal. In speaking of visions, I have already quoted some instances of this belief; here I may add one other. A devil cast out of a man by Fortunatus of Todi took the form of a stranger, and walked up and down the streets of Todi, crying: "Oh, the holy bishop Fortunatus! see what he has done! He has turned a stranger out of his lodging. I seek a place to rest in, and in this city I

[1] *Dial.* ii. 23. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 24. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 55.
[4] *Ibid.* iv. 55. [5] *Ibid.* iv. 57. [6] *Ibid.* iv. 57.
[7] *Ibid.* iii. 3. [8] *Ibid.* iv. 55: "oblationum coronae."
[9] *Ibid.* iii. 17. [10] *Ibid.* i. 11. [11] *Ibid.* iii. 7.
[12] *Ibid.* i. 4. [13] *Ibid.* ii. 3; iii. 5. [14] *Ibid.* i. 4.
[15] *Ibid.* i. 1, 10; ii. 3; iii. 5, 6. [16] *Ibid.* i. 10.

can find none." A certain man who was sitting by his fireside with his wife and little son, hearing the cry, went out and asked the stranger in. But while they were talking, the spirit suddenly attacked the child, and flung him into the fire before the eyes of his father. "Then the wretched, bereaved man knew whom he had entertained and whom the bishop had expelled from his lodging."[1]

This Fortunatus, we are told, "had a most singular grace in putting spirits to flight, so that sometimes he would cast out legions of devils from possessed bodies." The following instance is peculiar. A certain Tuscan lady who had violated an ecclesiastical rule was seized in church by an evil spirit. The priest attempted to cast it out by covering the lady with the altar-cloth; but because he presumed beyond his strength, a devil entered into him also. Then the lady was taken by her relatives to certain wizards, who plunged her into a river, reciting at the same time magical incantations. The result was that though the first demon was driven out, a whole legion entered in; "and from that time forward the woman began to be agitated with as many emotions and to shriek out with as many voices as there were devils in her body." At last she was brought to Fortunatus, who prayed over her for many days and nights, and in the end, with much difficulty, effected a cure.[2]

In the *Dialogues* we read of some curious visions of heaven and hell.[3] The vision of the soldier, which has been referred to in an earlier chapter,[4] is the most elaborate and remarkable. Volcanoes were regarded as entrances into hell, and Gregory says the mouths of the craters were growing wider, to accommodate the increased number of persons that pass through them as the world draws near its end. A dying man sent a message to a friend, who was also dying, to say that the ship was ready to take them to Sicily; and this was interpreted to mean that they were going to hell through the volcanoes in that island.[5] Hell itself was believed to be a furnace of material fire. The corpse of a dyer buried in the Church of St. Januarius near the Laurentian Gate in Rome, was heard shrieking in his tomb, "I burn! I burn!"[6] Flames broke out of the grave of a wicked

[1] *Dial.* i. 10.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 10.
[3] *Ibid.* iv. 36, 37.
[4] Pages 213, 214.
[5] *Dial.* iv. 35; cf. iv. 30.
[6] *Ibid.* iv. 54.

curialis of Valeria, consuming both the body and the sepulchre.[1] A dying man saw in a vision a bad presbyter named Tiburtius burning on a funeral pile.[2] Of purgatorial punishment we get two remarkable instances, where the spirits of dead persons were compelled to remain in sulphur baths and to serve as attendants on the living bathers.[3]

I will close this account of the *Dialogues* with two representative anecdotes, one of a wizard and the other of a haunted house. About the year 504 a certain Basilius was accused of practising magical arts in Rome, and was thrown into prison. Taking advantage, however, of the insanity of his gaoler, he escaped and fled into Valeria, disguised as a monk. Here he managed to win the good graces of the Bishop of San Vittorino, who recommended him to the famous Abbat Equitius. The story goes that, so soon as Equitius set eyes on the man, he recognized him to be "a devil," but as he was unable to convince the bishop, he received him into his monastery. Shortly afterwards the abbat set off on one of his preaching tours, and Basilius took advantage of his absence to bewitch a beautiful nun in a neighbouring convent, who fell into a fever and kept crying out, "I shall die at once unless Basilius the monk come to me and heal me by his skill in physic." But the elder monks would not permit Basilius to approach the convent without the permission of the abbat. They sent, however, a message to Equitius, to ask what they should do. So soon as Equitius heard the story he exclaimed, "Did not I say that Basilius was a devil and no monk? Go and drive him from the monastery." This was accordingly done, and the nun at once recovered. After his expulsion, Basilius was wont to declare that he had often by his magic suspended the abbat's cell in the air, but he had never been able to harm any of the monks. In the end Basilius was arrested, and "in an outbreak of Christian zeal" was burned alive in Rome.[4]

The second story is singular. When Datius of Milan was on his way to Constantinople, in the time of Justinian, he broke his journey at Corinth, where he endeavoured to hire a house large enough for himself and his company. After

[1] *Dial.* iv. 32.
[2] *Ibid.* iv. 31; cf. iv. 36.
[3] *Ibid.* iv. 40, 55.
[4] *Ibid.* i. 4.

seeking in vain for a long time, he at length discovered a good-sized mansion which seemed to suit his requirements. He was told by the people of the place, however, that the house was haunted by the devil, and had remained empty in consequence for several years. But Datius said, "We ought all the more to lodge in this house, if the wicked spirit has taken possession of it and driven men away." The place was accordingly prepared, and the bishop took up his quarters. When evening came he went to bed and fell asleep; but about midnight he was aroused by a hideous din, which resembled the roaring of lions, the bleating of sheep, the braying of asses, the hissing of serpents, the grunting of hogs, and the screaming of rats, all combining in terrific uproar. Then Datius in great rage got up and addressed the devil: "Thou art rightly served, wretch! Thou art he who said: *I will sit in the sides of the north; I will be like the Most High;* and now, through thy pride, see how thou art made like hogs and rats. Thou unworthily didst desire to imitate God, and now behold, according to thy deserts, thou dost imitate brutes." At these words the devil was so ashamed that he took himself off and never returned; and the haunted house was soon afterwards taken by some good Christians, who never suffered any further inconvenience.[1]

Such are the stories vouched for by the highest ecclesiastical authority and the keenest intellect of the age. Let me, in conclusion, once more call attention to the strange combination of shrewdness and superstition which characterized the mind of Gregory. It is certainly astonishing that the clear-headed man who managed the Papal estates and governed the Church with such admirable skill, should have contributed to the propagation of these wild tales of demons and wizards and haunted houses, of souls made visible, of rivers obedient to written orders, of corpses that scream and walk. And yet such was the fact. The landlord of the Papal Patrimonies and the author of the *Dialogues* are one and the same person. And in him we have, perhaps, the first genuine Italian example of the mediaeval intellect.

[1] *Dial.* iii. 4.

CHAPTER IV

GREGORY PATRIARCH OF THE WEST. HIS RELATIONS WITH THE CHURCHES OF THE SUBURBICARIAN PROVINCES AND THE ISLANDS

Apart from the primacy of honour which was universally conceded to the Roman Church, the patriarchal jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome was anciently recognized as extending in strict right only over the Churches of Central and Southern Italy and of the adjacent islands.[1] It was, in fact, conterminous with the jurisdiction of the Vicarius Urbis, which was exercised over the provinces of Picenum Suburbicarium, Campania, Tuscia, Umbria, Apulia, Calabria, Bruttii, Lucania, Valeria, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, and the lesser islands. Within these bounds, at the close of the sixth century, the authority of the Bishop of Rome was, of course, undisputed; beyond them he possessed, indeed (in virtue mainly of Imperial legislation), certain powers, visitatorial in their character, but they were somewhat indefinite, not strictly canonical, and by no means universally recognized. In Italy itself the Aemilian and Flaminian territories, together with Picenum Annonicarium, were immediately subject to the Metropolitan of Ravenna; Liguria, the Cottian Alps, and the Rhaetias, to the Archbishop of Milan; Venetia and Istria to the Patriarch of Aquileia; and beyond the borders of Italy the Pope had never hitherto exercised a jurisdiction which was entirely undisputed. How Gregory made use of his primacy of honour, and of the powers conferred on the Popes by Imperial legislation to assert a claim to supremacy over these other Churches, will be explained in the following chapter. At present I deal simply with his relation to the Churches within the ancient canonical limits of the patriarchate, *i.e.* in Central and Southern Italy and in the islands.

[1] Bright *Canons of the First Four General Councils* p. 22, *sqq.*

Within this area the only metropolitan Church besides the Roman was that of Cagliari in Sardinia. It has, indeed, been questioned whether the Church of Syracuse did not also enjoy this dignity. But the evidence of Gregory's letters proves conclusively that such was not the case.[1] The bishops of Sicily, together with the rest, were directly subject to the metropolitan jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome. Thus, save in respect of Sardinia, the area of the Pope's canonical authority as Metropolitan and as Patriarch was the same.

On the mainland a great portion of suburbicarian territory was at this time in possession of the Lombards, and with the Churches in these parts Gregory had but slight connexion. From many of the cities the Catholic clergy had fled, either to Sicily or to other districts which still remained in the hands of the Imperialists; and the Arian clergy whom the Lombards elected in their stead Gregory refused to recognize.[2] In some places, indeed, orthodox bishops still remained at their posts. But even with these the Pope had little intercourse. The hostilities between Romans and Lombards made communication extremely difficult, and frequent visits and appeals to Rome from the clergy isolated in Lombard territory were, of course, out of the question. Gregory, however, seems to have entertained hopes that by the agency of the Catholic clergy the Arian conquerors might eventually be converted to the orthodox faith. Thus a few months after his consecration—in January 591—he issued to all the bishops throughout Italy a vigorous address, intended to stimulate their efforts in this direction: "As the impious Authari last Easter forbade Lombard children to be baptized into the Catholic Faith—for which crime God Almighty slew him, that he should never see another Easter[3]—it is meet that your Fraternity should admonish all the Lombards in your dioceses that, in view of the pestilence that is threatening every place, they should reconcile the children baptized in the Arian

[1] Greg. *Epp.* i. 1, 68; xi. 31; cf. inscription of viii. 10. Gregory orders Sicilian bishops to assemble in synod at Rome, and to come to Rome to be consecrated. He permits the Bishop of Syracuse, when appointed Apostolic Vicar, to decide only the lesser causes. These facts prove that there can have been no metropolitan in the island.

[2] *Epp.* xi. 6.

[3] Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 35: "Rex Authari apud Ticinum nonas Septembris veneno, ut tradunt, accepto moritur."

heresy to the Catholic Faith, and so appease the wrath of God. Admonish all you can; impel them to the right faith with all your powers of persuasion; preach to them constantly the Word of eternal life, that when you appear in the presence of the severe Judge, you may be able to show souls that have been won by your pastoral solicitude."[1] Similarly, a few months later, when the plague was raging in the little Umbrian town of Narni, on the southern bank of the Nar—which, in spite of its inaccessible situation on its lofty hill, had fallen into the hands of the Lombards—Gregory wrote to the bishop to urge him to exhort the heretics of his flock to adopt the orthodox faith.[2] But if the Catholic clergy responded to the Pope's appeal, we have no information as to the measure of success that crowned their efforts. From the fact that Gregory never again alluded to the matter, we may, perhaps, conjecture that it was small.

In some respects the desolation caused by the Lombards occasioned Gregory much anxious thought and labour, as it was necessary for him to take measures in the interest of the devastated Churches. The effects of a Lombard onslaught were disastrous. In the 17th of his *Homilies on the Gospels* Gregory utters a lament over cities laid waste, fortified places overthrown, churches and monasteries reduced to ruins, and populous centres turned into dreary solitudes.[3] The capture of a town usually meant a complete or partial depopulation, and the death or the dispersion of the resident clergy. In some cases, indeed, the desolation was not absolute. A remnant of the inhabitants remained or returned after the pillage, and there was some hope that the place would again revive and be able to support a bishop of its own. Under such circumstances Gregory usually commissioned some neighbouring bishop to repair to the desolated Church, and ordain there a certain number of clerics to perform the necessary offices. Thus, in the first year of his pontificate, he sent the following mandate to Balbinus, bishop of Rosella, in respect of the old Tuscan town of Populonia[4]: "We have learnt that the Church of Populonia is so entirely destitute of clergy, that penance cannot be given to the dying or baptism to infants. We therefore charge your

[1] *Epp.* i. 17. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 4.
[3] *Hom. in Ev.* 17, § 16; cf. *Dial.* iii. 38; *Epp.* iii. 29.
[4] *Epp.* i. 15.

Fraternity, by the authority of these letters, to visit the aforesaid Church, and to ordain in the city one cardinal-presbyter[1] and two deacons, and in the parishes attached to the aforesaid Church three presbyters; selecting such men as you may consider most fitted for the office by their venerable life and serious character, and against whose appointment there exists no canonical impediment. Thus let provision be made with all due caution for the interests of the Holy Church." A similar commission was sent to the Bishop of Sipontum, in Apulia, in favour of the neighbouring Church of Canosa.[2] The Church of Terni, where a few clergy and people remained—not enough, however, to make it worth while to elect a bishop—was administered by the Bishop of Narni, whose episcopal residence was only six miles distant.[3] The Bishop of Agropoli was entrusted with the care of the three devastated cities of Velia, Buxentum, and Blanda, on the coast of Lucania, which were destitute alike of bishops and of priests.[4] The surviving Bishop of ruined Lissus was transferred to Squillace, on the condition of his returning to his former diocese if at any future time it should be recovered from the enemy.[5] And the Bishop of Taurianum (Seminara) in Bruttii was transferred to Lipari, with orders to revisit his old diocese from time to time.[6]

In the cases above mentioned, the Churches, though devastated, were yet not ruined beyond all hope of revival. But there were many places where the desolation was much more complete, where neither clergy nor people were left any longer, and where there was no chance of any future restoration. In such instances Gregory was accustomed to unite the ruined

[1] Cardinalis = "permanently attached" = "proprius." Cf. *Epp.* i. 81; ix. 71; xiii. 32. So Gregory speaks of "cardinalis sacerdos" or "pontifex" (*ibid.* i. 77, 79; ii. 12, 37; iii. 13;), as well as of "proprius sacerdos" or "pontifex" (*ibid.* i. 76; ii. 48; iii. 20), the expressions being used as interchangeable. In *Epp.* iii. 24, we get both terms, "cardinalem et proprium sacerdotem." Cf. also the words "incardinare," "incardinatio" (*ibid.* i. 81; ii. 37; iii. 13). Joh. Diac. *Vita* iii. 11, says: "Cardinales violenter in parochiis ordinatos forensibus, in pristinum cardinem Gregorius revocabat." "The bishop, priest, or deacon made 'cardinal' of a Church in this sense was attached to it permanently, in contradistinction to bishops administering the affairs of a diocese during a vacancy, and priests or deacons holding subordinate or temporary posts in a parish church" (Smith *Dict. Ant.* i. p. 291).

[2] *Epp.* i. 51. [3] *Ibid.* ix. 60. [4] *Ibid.* ii. 42.

[5] *Ibid.* ii. 37. [6] *Ibid.* ii. 19.

district with a neighbouring diocese. Thus, in October 590, he joined to the diocese of Formiae (Mola) in Latium, the devastated see of Minturnae, close to the mouth of the Liris, nine miles off. Both these cities were situated within a short distance of Gaeta, whither the seat of the bishopric has been since transferred. The document authorizing the unification was addressed to Bacauda bishop of Formiae, and runs as follows[1]: "The necessities of the times and the diminution of the population require us to make such arrangements for the desolate Churches as may be prudent and beneficial. Whereas, then, we have learnt that the Church of Minturnae is utterly desolate, and destitute both of clergy and people, and whereas we consider that your petition for its union with the Church of Formiae, in which rests the body of St. Erasmus the Martyr, and over which your Fraternity presides, is dictated by right feeling and is thoroughly just; therefore we have thought it necessary, out of consideration for the desolation of that place and the poverty of your Church, that the revenues of the aforesaid Church of Minturnae, with all that has belonged to it or that may belong to it in any way by any right or privilege, ancient or modern, should be transferred to the right and power of your Church by the authority of this our injunction. You shall, therefore, from the present time look upon the Church of Minturnae as your own Church, and attend to it as well as you can, so that the property which hitherto, perhaps, has been entirely neglected, may henceforth be profitable to the poor and to the clergy of your own Church." Many similar arrangements were made. In 592 Cumae was joined to Misenum[2]; Tres-Tabernae to Velletri, five miles off[3]; Fondi to Terracina, both being cities of Latium, about ten miles apart.[4] In 593 Cures Sabinae (Correze) was united to Nomentum (Mentana)[5]; and in 595 Carina was amalgamated with Reggio.[6] The arrangement made for the bishopric of Velletri indicates that the people were beginning to move from the plains into the hills for protection against the enemy. The character of the times, Gregory writes, makes it expedient to transfer episcopal sees from the

[1] *Epp.* i. 8. This letter differs from the usual formula, "de adunandis ecclesiis" (*Lib. Diurn.* ed. Rosière, No. ix.), which is found in Greg. *Epp.* ii. 48; iii. 20; and (slightly altered) vi. 9.

[2] *Epp.* ii. 44. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 48. [4] *Ibid.* iii. 13.

[5] *Ibid.* iii. 20. [6] *Ibid.* vi. 9.

cities in which they were formerly established to other places in the same diocese which might be safer, so that the people might be less exposed to danger from the inroads of the enemy. He therefore permitted the Bishop of Velletri to transfer his residence from Velletri to a place called Arenata, which is probably to be identified with the modern Rocca Massima, and there to set up his episcopal chair in the Church of St. Andrew.[1]

The districts in Italy which still remained in the hands of the Imperialists were divided up into a vast number of little dioceses, many of them only a few miles in extent. Every town of any size, and many towns which were little better than villages, possessed a bishop. The most considerable see was that of Naples, and among the more important of the rest at this time were Perugia, Orvieto, Terracina, Agropoli, Reggio, Squillace, Taranto, Gallipoli, and Otranto. In the affairs of the diocese of Naples Gregory took the warmest interest, and the prominent part he played in the Neapolitan elections will be alluded to immediately. Of the other sees we know little. The disturbances incident on the Lombard invasion had thrown out of gear the machinery of ecclesiastical government. Communication between Rome and outlying dioceses was frequently interrupted, and many bishops found it impossible to maintain close relations with their metropolitan.[2] Gregory did what he could to keep in touch with all the bishops under his jurisdiction, but the number of his letters addressed to Italian prelates and dealing with the affairs of their dioceses is curiously small.

While on the mainland the Lombard invasion had thrown everything into confusion, in the islands the Church system was maintained as before. Of these islands, as has been already said, the most important by far was the corn-growing, fruit-bearing island of Sicily, which for centuries had been most intimately connected with Rome, and the Churches of which were bound by special ties to the Roman See. Here were some thirteen dioceses, considerably larger than the majority of those in Italy. The principal one was that of Syracuse, a place which, though sadly declined from its former greatness, was nevertheless still important as the residence of the Praetor, the seat of a bishop, and the head-quarters of the Rector of the Sicilian

[1] *Epp.* ii. 17. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 28.

Patrimony. Of the other bishoprics the most notable were those of Catania, Taormina, Messina, Palermo (also at times the head-quarters of an agent of the Patrimony), Girgenti, and Camerana. All these Sicilian Churches were in close touch with Rome. Gregory watched over their welfare with constant solicitude, and through his agents kept himself accurately informed of all their affairs. The quantity of letters relating to them is evidence of the minuteness of his knowledge and of the interest he took in the diocesan matters.

The very first letter which Gregory wrote after his election to the pontificate was directed to the bishops of Sicily. As there was no metropolitan in the island, Gregory thought good to commit to a Vicar[1] the general supervision of the Sicilian Church. Curiously enough, instead of conferring this honour on one of the bishops, Gregory, in the first instance, gave the vicariate to the subdeacon Peter, the rector of the Papal estates. The appointment was notified to the bishops in a letter which runs as follows: "We have thought it necessary, in accordance with the judgment of our predecessors, to commit all your affairs to one and the same man, that where we cannot be ourselves in person we may be represented by one who has received our instructions. Wherefore, by God's help, we have appointed Peter, a subdeacon of our Church, to be our Vicar in the province of Sicily. Nor can we doubt what the character of his actions will be, seeing that, by God's grace, we have committed to him the whole Patrimony of our Church (in Sicily). Further, we have thought it right that your Fraternity should with due honour meet together once a year, either at Syracuse or at Catania, so that all that concerns the interest of your Churches, the relieving of the poor and afflicted, the admonition of all men, and the correction of offenders, may be duly settled by you in conjunction with the aforesaid Peter, our

[1] It was at this time the custom of the Popes to appoint Vicars in the extra-Italian provinces—usually metropolitans, sometimes simple bishops, and occasionally, as here, ecclesiastics of even lower rank. Damasus, Siricius, and Leo all made the Bishop of Thessalonica their Vicar in Eastern Illyricum. Vigilius conferred the vicariate on the Metropolitan of Justiniana Prima; Gregory conferred the dignity on the bishops of Justiniana Prima (v. 10, 16), Arles (v. 58), Syracuse (ii. 8), and possibly Seville (ix. 227; see p. 412). In Africa Columbus seems to have acted as a kind of informal Vicar. The appointment of the subdeacon Peter was unusual, and does not appear to have been a success.

subdeacon. Let all hatred which fosters wickedness be far from your council. Let all envy and execrable discord die away amongst you. Let your charity and God-pleasing peace prove that you are God's bishops. Let all things be done with propriety and quietness, that you may have the right to be called a council of bishops." [1]

I may here remark that Gregory was a firm believer in the utility of local synods, for the safeguarding of true doctrine, the composition of quarrels, and the correction of manners. The Council of Nicaea had directed that such synods should be held twice in the year—before Lent and in the autumn [2]—and this wise provision was renewed by several other Councils.[3] Nevertheless, the bishops of the sixth century seem to have been strongly averse to holding these meetings, and Gregory found it necessary to remind those of Sicily and Sardinia, and particularly of Gaul, of their obligation in this matter. It may cause surprise that in the letter just quoted Gregory orders the Sicilian bishops to meet only once in the year, whereas he directs the metropolitan of Sardinia to summon a council twice annually,[4] according to the strict provision of the canons. But the case of the Sicilian bishops was peculiar. For being directly subject to the Pope, they were in the habit of assembling at Rome at stated periods, to discuss their affairs in his presence, and to get his advice. Originally the bishops gathered in Rome every year at the time of the anniversary of the Pope's consecration; since the days of Leo, however, they came each only once in three years. Gregory now made two more changes. First, he ordered that the bishops should meet, not on the anniversary of his own consecration—a mark of honour which seemed to him "foolish and superfluous"—but on June 29, the festival of the Apostle.[5] And secondly, he directed that, whereas the triennial journey had been attended with difficulty

[1] *Epp.* i. 1. [2] Canon 5. [3] Cf. Chalcedon, c. 19. [4] *Epp.* iv. 9.

[5] *Epp.* i. 39*a*. June 29 was, of course, a favourite date for bishops to visit Rome. Cf. Greg. *Hom. in Ev.* 37. § 9: "Cassio Narniensi episcopo consuetudo fuerat annis singulis natalitio apostolorum die Romam venire." It was believed that to keep the festival of a saint gave a man a special claim to the saint's protection and regard. Thus Greg. Tur. *H. F.* ii. 14 says that the three great festivals of St. Martin were the dedication of his church, the translation of his body, and the anniversary of his consecration: "Quod si fideliter celebraveris, et in praesenti saeculo et in futuro patrocinia beati antistitis promereberis."

—the civil authorities on the island being opposed to it, and on one occasion at least, in 591, actually preventing the delegates setting out[1]—the bishops should in future assemble in Rome once in five years, instead of once in three, and that they should take care not to arouse the Praetor's suspicions. Gregory further enjoined that the bishops of Lipari and Reggio should attend the quinquennial synod.[2]

The most prominent of the Sicilian bishops during Gregory's pontificate was Maximianus, formerly Abbat of St. Andrew's in Rome, and one of the most intimate of Gregory's friends.[3] He was appointed to the bishopric of Syracuse in 591, and he retained it till his death in 594. Soon after his appointment Gregory made him his Vicar in Sicily, with power to determine all smaller and less important causes, those involving any special difficulty being reserved for the decision of the Pope himself. In conferring this honour on Maximianus, Gregory was careful to explain that the vicariate was bestowed upon him personally as a mark of esteem, and not in virtue of his official position as bishop of Syracuse, and therefore that the Church of Syracuse could not on this account claim any superiority over the other Churches of Sicily.[4] This last provision is characteristic. In his government of the Churches of his metropolitanate, Gregory was always particularly anxious to keep all in a state of equal subordination, and to repress any usurpation of rights or privileges on the part of any individual Church.[5] Thus, to quote one other small example, the Pope was informed in 598 that the deacons of Catania were in the habit of wearing "campagi" at religious ceremonies. Now, these campagi were a kind of slipper, covering only the heel and toes, and they were worn as part of their ceremonial dress by the higher clergy of Rome and Ravenna. As a special privilege the use of the campagi had been

[1] *Epp.* i. 70. It was not in Sicily alone that the officials tried to hinder bishops resorting to Rome (see *ibid.* vi. 59).

[2] *Ibid.* vii. 19. Joh. Diac. iii. 25 remarks: "Ubi notandum quia si beatus Gregorius xenia, quod credi nefas est, anhelaret, non episcoporum adventus a triennio in quinquennium protelaret, immo a triennio in biennium proculdubio festinaret."

[3] Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 11.

[4] *Epp.* ii. 8.

[5] *Epp.* viii. 27: "Ecclesiastici vigoris ordo confunditur, si aut temere inlicita praesumantur, aut impune non concessa temptantur."

granted to the clergy of Messina; the clergy of Catania, however, had no such right. Gregory accordingly issued a peremptory order, forbidding them ever to wear this article of dress in future.[1]

For his old friend Maximianus Gregory entertained a high regard, and was generally satisfied with his conduct both as Bishop and as Apostolic Vicar. It appears, however, that this prelate was of somewhat hasty and quarrelsome temper, and on one occasion the Pope felt it his duty to write him a sharp reproof.[2] "I remember that I have often warned you not to be hasty in passing judgment. And yet I have now learnt that in a fit of rage you have excommunicated the Very Reverend Abbat Eusebius. I am indeed astonished that neither his past life, nor his great age, nor his long illness can turn away your anger. Whatever may have been his fault, his sufferings from ill health should have been a sufficient punishment. When God scourges a man there is no need for men to lay on the stripes." But although he could utter a rebuke when necessary, Gregory invariably showed the most kindly consideration for Maximianus in his difficult position. The following extract from a letter to Peter the Subdeacon illustrates his anxiety to protect his old friend from even trifling worries[3]: "I am greatly grieved because I severely rebuked Pretiosus, the servant of God, for a slight fault, and so sent him away in bitterness and sorrow. I wrote to my Lord Bishop Maximianus to send Pretiosus back to me, but he was very unwilling to do so. Now, I neither can nor ought to do anything to annoy the Bishop, for, occupied as he is in the work of God, he ought to be comforted and strengthened, not troubled and annoyed. And yet I am told that Pretiosus is very sad because he cannot return to me. However, as I said before, I cannot bear to annoy my Lord the Bishop, who is unwilling to let him go. And so, between the two, I remain undecided. If you have more wisdom in your little body than I have in mine, arrange the matter so that my wishes may be accomplished without inconvenience to my Lord Bishop. Indeed, if you see that he is at all annoyed, you had better say nothing to him about the matter."

In Sardinia the state of the Church was unsatisfactory in the extreme. The metropolitan see of Cagliari was at this

[1] *Epp.* viii. 27. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 35. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 38.

time occupied by a very singular character, a certain Januarius, to whose folly, frivolity, and incapacity must be attributed the lamentable condition of the Church in the island. This Januarius was a silly, half-witted old man, who shamefully neglected all his duties, and scandalized every one by his egregiously eccentric conduct. At the same time, he perpetrated the most outrageous actions with an appearance of such guileless innocence and simplicity, that Gregory himself seems to have been at a loss how to deal with him. Complaints of him, however, poured into Rome from all sides. It was said that the bishops and priests of Sardinia were ill treated by the Imperial officials, yet Januarius made no effort to protect them; that the clergy despised him and set at naught his authority, resorting to the patronage of laymen; that his very archdeacon lived openly with women. His suffragan bishops were slack in their duties, had ceased to assemble in synods, neglected to apply to their metropolitan for the date of Easter, and ventured to travel abroad without asking his permission. Vacancies in churches were not filled up, and lapsed clerics were reinstated in their offices. The nunneries were grossly neglected; in the monasteries men who had fallen as monks were created abbats; the hospitals were fearfully mismanaged, and no one took the trouble to inspect the accounts. On the estates belonging to the Church of Cagliari the peasants were permitted to practise idolatry, and no attempt was made to convert the pagan islanders, though their numbers were considerable. The slaves of Jews who took asylum in the churches were either given back to their masters, or paid for contrary to the law. In short, the Church of Sardinia was the scandal of the time. The utter confusion and mismanagement of affairs there was unique even in an age when confusion and mismanagement were not uncommon.

This disorder Gregory did all in his power to remedy. He sternly rebuked the clergy for their disobedience, and ordered the bishops to resume the custom of assembling in synod twice a year, and of applying for the date of Easter. The abuses concerning the vacancies and the restitution of lapsed clergy were to be remedied; and for the future no one was to receive ordination who was illiterate, or a member of a curia, or twice married, or had not for several years lived a continent

life, or was not a zealous student of the Scriptures, and really charitable. He ordered that a man of high character should be appointed to transact the secular business of the nunneries, that the nuns might no longer be obliged to collect their rents in person or appear in the public offices to pay the taxes. All nuns guilty of "adultery" were to be severely punished and confined in stricter houses; their accomplices, if laymen, were to be excommunicated, if ecclesiastics, to be degraded and confined in monasteries for penance. The old custom of inspecting the accounts of the xenodochia at Cagliari was to be resumed, and the management of these institutions was to be confided to men of probity and diligence, who must be either monks or ecclesiastics, that they might not be subject to the jurisdiction of the civil officials. For the conversion of the pagans two missionaries were sent from Rome, Felix a bishop, and Cyriacus the monk, and the bishopric of Phausiana (Terranova) was re-established. Januarius himself was rebuked for his avarice, and forbidden to receive money for the ordination of clergy, the veiling of virgins, or the marriage of clerics. Finally, the old Archbishop was encouraged to communicate freely with Gregory, and two responsales at Rome were appointed to bring his communications to the notice of the Pope.[1]

These vigorous measures seem to have effected some sort of reformation in the Church of Sardinia. But neither threats nor remonstrances availed to amend the conduct of the erratic Archbishop himself. A prodigious mass of complaints (*tanta querimoniarum moles*) were filed against him. Not only was he avaricious and violent, but he was entirely reckless in his disregard of justice and fair dealing. Among other offences he had actually, in open defiance of the canons, excommunicated a nobleman merely for a private grudge. In 592 the charges brought against him had grown so numerous that Gregory sent a commissioner to Sardinia to hold an inquiry and, if necessary, to compel the Archbishop to submit to arbitration. At the same time, he wrote privately to Januarius, urging him to avoid a scandal, "and if you find that you have taken or hold anything unjustly, restore it before the trial commences."[2] This

[1] *Epp.* ii. 47; iv. 9, 23–27, 29; ix. 11, 202–204; xiv. 2.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. 47.

investigation, however, was apparently unsatisfactory, for in the following year Januarius received a summons to come to Rome and answer in person the charges brought against him.[1] But it is doubtful whether the trial took place. At any rate, the irrepressible old man did not see fit to make any alteration in his behaviour. In 594 he went to consecrate a monastery, where he shocked everybody by a most unseemly display of violence and rapacity.[2] But, disgraceful as his conduct was on this occasion, it was nothing in comparison with an outrage which he perpetrated a few years later, and which drew even from the long-suffering Pope a vehement remonstrance[3]: "Paul the Apostle says, *Rebuke not an elder*. But the rule is only to be observed when the elder's bad example does not drag down to ruin the souls of the younger. When an elder sets a fatal example, he is to be rebuked most sharply. Now, such wickedness has been reported to us of your old age, that were we not inclined to be merciful, we should smite you with an anathema. For it is said that on the Lord's Day, before saying mass, you went and ploughed up your neighbour's corn-field, and afterwards celebrated mass; and further, when mass was over, that you actually dared to remove your neighbour's boundary-stones. Every one knows what punishment such a deed deserves. But we could not believe that you were so wicked as this, until we had questioned our son, the Abbat Cyriacus, who was in Cagliari at the time, and who affirmed that it was true. Even yet, however, we spare your grey hairs. Nevertheless, old man, be advised: be wise at last, and restrain your scandalous levity and wickedness. The nearer you are to death the more careful and fearful you ought to be. A sentence of punishment has indeed been drawn up against you, but, knowing your simplicity and age, we keep it in reserve for this once. Those, however, who advised you to do this thing we decree excommunicate for two months, permitting them, if any human chance befall them within that time, to receive the Viaticum. But do you henceforth be cautious and hold aloof from their counsels. And look well to yourself, for if you learn evil of those to whom you ought to teach good, we will spare you no longer."

This epistle is certainly not wanting in severity, but Gregory found it impossible to be angry for long with this irresponsible

[1] *Epp.* iii. 36. [2] *Ibid.* v. 2. [3] *Ibid.* ix. 1.

old dotard. "That I chide and rebuke you," he wrote a month later,[1] "comes not from harshness, but from brotherly love, because I desire that you may be found before Almighty God a bishop, not in name only—which brings punishment—but in merit—which brings reward. For since we are one member in the Body of our Redeemer, I am both wounded by your transgression and also gladdened by your good conduct." Gregory's kindness towards this extraordinary prelate is strikingly manifested in one of the last letters which he wrote, in which also we get a parting glimpse of Archbishop Januarius.[2] "You tell us that our brother and fellow-bishop Januarius, when saying mass, frequently suffers from such physical distress, that he can scarcely after long intervals resume at the place where he broke off; and you say that for this reason many are in doubt whether they ought to receive the communion when he has consecrated. Let them be told, then, to have no fear, but to communicate with perfect faith and security. For the sickness of the consecrator neither changes nor defiles the blessing of the sacred mystery. Still, our brother ought certainly to be advised in private that when he feels an attack coming on, he should refrain from celebrating, lest he expose himself to contempt and cause offence to weak minds." The picture of this petulant, unprincipled grey-headed child, overcome with infirmities both of mind and body, and exposed to the scorn and disgust of his clergy and people, is not an agreeable one to contemplate.

One direction to the clergy of Sardinia in reference to the confirmation of the baptized ought here to be mentioned. In the baptismal ceremony according to the Roman ritual there were three unctions. The first, before immersion, was administered by presbyters with simple oil on the breast and other parts of the body. The second, after immersion, was administered by presbyters with chrism. In later times it was on the top of the head, but in Gregory's time it seems to have been on the breast.[3] The third unction was administered with chrism on the forehead by the bishop in confirmation. This unction with chrism on the forehead, according to the Roman ritual, was

[1] *Epp.* ix. 11. [2] *Ibid.* xiv. 2.

[3] *Sacr. Gelas.* i. 44, "in cerebro." But Gregory *Epp.* iv. 9 has "in pectore."

reserved for the bishop,[1] though in the East it was administered by presbyters. The clergy of Sardinia had combined the Eastern and Western usages—the baptizing presbyter anointing the child not only on the breast, but also on the forehead, and the bishop subsequently in confirmation repeating the unction on the forehead. Of this mixed usage Gregory disapproved. He wrote to Januarius: "Let not the bishops presume to sign infants, who are being baptized, a second time on the forehead with chrism; but let the presbyters anoint those who are being baptized on the breast, so that the bishops may afterwards have to anoint them on the forehead."[2] That is, Gregory ordered that the Roman usage should be strictly followed, the presbyter anointing the breast with chrism, and the bishop alone anointing the forehead in confirmation. This order, however, gave great offence in Sardinia. "It has come to our ears," wrote Gregory soon afterwards,[3] "that some have been offended by our having forbidden presbyters to touch those who are being baptized with chrism. In issuing our order we acted in accordance with the ancient use of the Roman Church. But if any are in fact distressed thereby, we grant that where there are no bishops, presbyters are also to touch those who are being baptized on their foreheads with chrism." In other words, in the absence of the bishop, Gregory permitted a presbyter to confirm with chrism, according to the Eastern usage. We shall meet later on with other examples of Gregory's wise toleration of local deviations from the established Roman ritual.

With the dioceses in the other islands Gregory had not much to do. He established a new bishop at Malta,[4] and again at Lipari, the chief of the Aeolian group.[5] In Corsica matters

[1] Innocent I. *Epp.* 1, § 3 (Labbe, ii. p. 1246).

[2] *Epp.* iv. 9: "Episcopi baptizandos (*v.l.* baptizatos) infantes signare in frontibus bis chrismate non praesumant, sed presbiteri baptizandos tangant in pectore, ut episcopi postmodum tangere debeant in fronte." The word "baptizandi" seems to be merely the equivalent of *οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι*, *i.e.* those undergoing the process of baptism which includes confirmation.

[3] *Ibid.* iv. 26: "Pervenit quoque ad nos, quosdam scandalizatos fuisse, quod presbiteros chrismate tangere eos qui baptizandi sunt, prohibuimus. Et nos quidem secundum usum veterem ecclesiae nostrae fecimus. Sed si omnino de hac re aliqui contristantur, ubi episcopi desunt, ut presbiteri et in frontibus baptizandos chrismate tangere debeant, concedimus." The absolute "chrismate tangere prohibuimus" of the first sentence is very extraordinary. Gregory seems to have been writing in a hurry, and omitted the words "in fronte."

[4] *Epp.* x. 1.

[5] *Ibid.* ii. 19.

were in great confusion. Ecclesiastical discipline had become relaxed, paganism was rife, and the tyranny of the Government officials was so cruel that the inhabitants sold their children to pay the taxes, and even deserted in numbers to the Lombards to escape from the intolerable burden. Gregory did what he could to remedy these abuses. The bishopric of Aleria, which had long been left vacant, was filled up. The Pope espoused the cause of the islanders, and sent formal complaints of the officials to the court at Constantinople. He also encouraged the bishops to win back the idolaters, and, to second their efforts, he sent a body of monks under Orosius, who were ordered to establish their monastery in some strong place which might easily be fortified against the marauding Lombards.[1] But the ties between the Church of Corsica and that of Rome were somewhat loose, and Gregory does not appear to have been greatly concerned to strengthen the connexion.

We may now consider more in detail the method of Gregory's government of these provinces of his patriarchate.

In the first place, it was Gregory's policy to watch with peculiar care over the election of bishops,[2] with a view to securing the appointment of capable men, qualified to transact the business of their dioceses without continually appealing to Rome. Accordingly, on the death or deposition of any bishop, Gregory took the most stringent precautions to provide for the election of a suitable successor.

On such occasions the usual procedure was as follows: When a suburbicarian see fell vacant, a notice was sent to the Pope, who, as metropolitan, was responsible for the administration of the diocese during the vacancy. Whereupon the Pope appointed a Visitor—generally a neighbouring bishop,[3]—to administer the see, secure its revenues, and provide for the speedy election of a new bishop. The common formula of the appointment ran as follows[4]: "We have received official notification

[1] *Epp.* i. 50, 77, 79; v. 38. [2] Joh. Diac. *Vita* iii. 7.

[3] In one case (*Epp.* i. 78) the charge of a Church was committed to a presbyter. But this was only a temporary arrangement. Each diocese usually had a separate Visitor assigned to it; sometimes, however, we find as many as three dioceses committed to the charge of a single Visitor (*ibid.* ii. 42; vi. 21).

[4] For examples of this formula (*Lib. Diurn.* ed. Rosière, App. 2, No. 109) in Gregory, see *Epp.* ii. 39; vii. 16; xiii. 16. On the same model, though

of the death of the Bishop of X. We therefore solemnly commit to your Fraternity the office of Visitor to the bereaved Church, which office you must so discharge that no one may venture to meddle wrongfully with the promotions of the clergy, or with the revenues, ornaments, plate, and other belongings of the aforesaid Church. We accordingly require your Fraternity to hasten to the aforesaid Church, and zealously to charge the clergy and the people to lay aside all party spirit, and to select as bishop some one who is both worthy of so high an office and is not ineligible according to canon law. And, when he is elected, let him come to us for consecration, bringing with him the formal document of his election, confirmed by the signatures of the electors, and an attesting letter from your Love. We charge your Fraternity not to permit any one belonging to another Church to be chosen, unless, perchance, no one of the clergy of X be found to be deserving of the episcopate. Above all, take care that no layman presume to aspire to this office, whatever be his merits or manner of life. Otherwise, you yourself will incur the danger of being degraded from your office—which may God forbid!" At the same time, a circular was despatched from Rome to the clergy, nobles, and people of the vacant see, notifying the appointment of the Visitor, and repeating the directions concerning the election of the new bishop.[1]

When the Visitor arrived, he took over the management of the diocese, acting in most respects as though he were the proper bishop, but ordaining no clergy unless he had received an express commission from Rome to do so.[2] One of his first duties was to assemble the principal clergy of the Church, and in their presence make an inventory of the property of the Church and of the deceased bishop. Gregory was very particular that no portion of these properties should unlawfully be

with slightly different wording, are *Epp.* ii. 25; v. 13; ix. 80, 184. For another shorter formula, see *ibid.* i. 15, 51. Different from both are *Epp.* i. 76; ii. 42; vi. 21; ix. 140.

[1] The common formula (*Lib. Diurn.* ed. Rosière, App. 2, No. 110) is found in *Epp.* ii. 40; iv. 39; v. 14, 22; ix. 81, 100, 185; xiii. 17, 20. Sometimes the inscription ran, "Clero, nobilibus et plebi," or "Clero, ordini et plebi," sometimes "Clero et populo." In i. 79; vi. 26; x. 19 it is only "Clero, nobilibus"; in ii. 5, "Clero, nobilibus, ordini et plebi."

[2] As for instance, in *Epp.* i. 15, 51, 79; ii. 42; vi. 38.

abstracted. The Visitor was allowed no perquisites beyond his pay, and it was not permitted that even the cost of the inventory should be taken from the estate.[1] It seems, however, that the practice of openly plundering the goods of a deceased bishop, though not unusual in Spain and France, did not as yet obtain in Italy. At any rate, there is no allusion to it in the letters of Gregory.

The most urgent matter was, of course, the election of a new bishop. According to a canon of the Council of Chalcedon, a see might not remain vacant for more than three months[2]; but, just as in ancient times, this period had frequently been exceeded by reason of the persecutions, so, in the sixth century, it was often prolonged by the feuds and cabals of the electors. These electors were still the clergy, nobles, and people of the diocese; for Leo's maxim yet held good in fact: "He that is to preside over all must be chosen by all."[3] They were assisted in their choice by the Visitor, and sometimes by the chief magistrate or military governor of the district. The mode of election was usually by scrutiny of votes, though it was sometimes by acclamation, and sometimes through delegates by whose act the body of electors agreed to abide.[4] The confirmation of the election rested with the metropolitan, who, in the sixth century at least, had also the right of veto.[5] If the votes of the electors happened to be divided, it was the privilege of the metropolitan to choose the candidate whom he considered most fit, and under these circumstances Gregory was accustomed either to summon the rival candidates to Rome, and there personally examine them,[6] or to commit the examination to one of his own agents,[7] or else to a neighbouring bishop on whose

[1] *Epp.* iv. 11. For the "inventarium," compare *ibid.* iii. 22.

[2] Canon 25. The interval of three months was longer than that which was customary at Alexandria, where the dead Patriarch was interred by his successor (Liberatus *Brev.* 20)—a practice followed in one instance at Constantinople (Soc. vii. 40); shorter than that allowed in Africa, viz. one year (*Cod. Can. Eccl. Afr.* 74). Justinian *Nov.* 123, c. 1 fixed the limit at six months. Gregory endeavoured to enforce the canonical three months' limit (*Epp.* vii. 14, 39). Two years after Gregory's death a Roman synod forbade an election to be held within three days of the late bishop's burial (Labbe *Conc.* v. 1616). The object of this regulation was to prevent bishops nominating their own successors.

[3] Leo. I. *Epp.* 89, § 3 (Labbe, iii. p. 1399).

[4] For this last, see *Epp.* iii. 35.

[5] *Epp.* i. 55, 56; vii. 38; x. 7.

[6] *Epp.* v. 54.

[7] *Ibid.* v. 20; vii. 38.

judgment he could rely.[1] Thus on one occasion Gregory requested the Archbishop of Ravenna to summon the bishop-elect of Rimini, and examine him, and if he approved of him, to send him to Rome for consecration.[2] The metropolitan, however, great as his powers were, was not permitted to obtrude a nominee of his own into a bishopric against the will of the clergy and people. But in some cases, where the electors were culpably neglectful, Gregory, on his own responsibility, appointed as bishops such persons as he thought would be both efficient and acceptable.[3] The consecration of the new bishop was generally performed in Rome.

Beside the ordinary disqualifications for the clerical office—*e.g.* immorality, bigamy, marriage with a widow or *divorcée*, liability to civil or military service, self-mutilation, ignorance of letters, having done public penance or taken usury, or having endeavoured to secure ordination by simony or secular influence,[4] and the like—there were certain special conditions which rendered a man ineligible for the episcopate. Gregory was extremely unwilling to consecrate strangers, except in cases of necessity, when none of the clergy of the vacant diocese were eligible.[5] Moreover, he utterly forbade laymen to be consecrated,[6] though he was willing to promote monks, or ecclesiastics in minor orders.[7] He was anxious also that a candidate should have some literary qualifications. For instance, he objected against Rusticus, a deacon who was nominated for the bishopric of Ancona, that he was reported not to know the Psalter, and requested the Bishop of Rimini to find out how many of the Psalms he was unable to repeat.[8]

The difficulties and intrigues of an episcopal election in the latter end of the sixth century may be illustrated by an account of the transactions which befell at Naples in 591 and the years following.

[1] *Epp.* ii. 24; x. 13. [2] *Ibid.* ix. 138. [3] *Ibid.* i. 79.

[4] *Ibid.* ii. 37; iv. 26. In ii. 37 (written to the Bishop of Squillace) Gregory adds: "Afros passim, vel incognitos peregrinos ad ecclesiasticos ordines tendentes nulla ratione suscipias, quia Afri quidem aliqui Manichaei, aliqui rebaptizati, peregrini vero plurimi etiam in minoribus ordinibus constituti fortiori de se praetendisse honori saepe probati sunt."

[5] *Ibid.* i. 18, and *passim*.

[6] *Ibid.* ii. 25; ix. 215, 218; xiii. 16.

[7] *Ibid.* xii. 4. [8] *Ibid.* xiv. 11.

In 591 Demetrius bishop of Naples was found guilty on scandalous charges and deposed. So in September, Gregory, in accordance with the usual custom, appointed as Visitor Paul bishop of the little Tuscan town of Nepi, and wrote to the clergy and people of Naples to choose a new bishop without delay.[1] But the hot-headed, contentious Neapolitans were indisposed to come to a speedy agreement. The city was torn with rival factions. Almost immediately after Bishop Paul's arrival, one party attached itself to him, and importuned Gregory to ordain him to the vacant see. But the Pope, who had already had some experience of the fickle and factious spirit of the Neapolitans, distrusted this sudden enthusiasm, and refused to sanction Paul's translation until sufficient time should have elapsed to make him and his supporters better acquainted.[2] The wisdom of this proceeding soon became manifest. For the warm championship of one party provoked the violent animosity of the other. Tumults and faction fights were of daily occurrence in the streets of Naples, and the unfortunate Visitor began to lead a most uncomfortable life. The dignity of the bishopric no longer attracted him, and his sole wish was to escape as soon as possible to his own quiet diocese.[3] This, however, Gregory would not permit. He was determined to "fortify with every device of security" the troubled Church of Naples, and he answered Paul's eager entreaties for release only by appointing a Visitor at Nepi to celebrate in Paul's place the approaching Easter festival.[4]

During the summer of 592 matters grew steadily worse. The riots in Naples increased in violence, and Paul began even to be apprehensive about his safety. At last, in the early autumn, a climax was reached. Belonging to the clique hostile to Paul was a certain rich and aristocratic lady named Clementina, who, like many of the *grandes dames* of the period, took an active interest in ecclesiastical affairs. Although Clementina herself preferred to keep in the background, she was willing to co-operate with her faction in plotting against the Visitor. At any rate, her slaves, who presumably acted upon instructions, together with some of the citizens, waylaid Paul in a lonely spot between Naples and Pozzuoli called the

[1] *Epp.* ii. 5.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. 12.
[3] *Ibid.* ii. 18.
[4] *Ibid.* ii. 26.

Camp of Lucullus, and there subjected him to gross personal outrage. The sensation caused by this affair was immense. Gregory wrote from Rome in furious indignation, urging the authorities to search for the offenders and punish them with all possible severity. Even the Neapolitans were ashamed of their disgraceful violence, and from this time the party passions cooled down a little and the rioting ceased.[1]

In October or November the leaders of the factions came to an understanding, on the basis of an agreement to elect some one equally inoffensive to both sides. Their choice fell on a subdeacon of the Roman Church named Florentius—a man of excellent character and highly approved by Gregory. It seemed at last as though the struggle were about to end to the satisfaction of everybody; but an unexpected obstacle to the settlement presented itself. The subdeacon Florentius, who had heard all about the affair of Paulus, and had doubtless drawn his conclusions as to the prospects of a happy life at Naples, absolutely refused to accept the profferred dignity, and, in his fear lest the Pope might insist on consecrating him against his will, fled from Rome, and remained in hiding. And Gregory had too much sympathy with his aversion to the episcopate to order him to be sought for.[2]

Thus, Florentius having vanished and Paul being now universally regarded as ineligible, the whole tedious business of the Neapolitan election had to be commenced afresh. Once more the Pope wrote letters to the clergy and people of Naples, urging them to agree without loss of time on some fit person, and to get him consecrated by the provincial bishops on the spot, or else to send delegates to Rome with full powers to make an election. And once more the old feuds broke out with such violence that the prospect of an amicable arrangement seemed further off than ever. The clergy and the people held irreconcilable views, and neither were willing to make concessions. Of the two parties, however, the laymen were the most tractable. At any rate, they so far obeyed the Pope's injunctions

[1] *Epp.* iii. 1, 2.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 15. John says (iii. 8): "Cum Gregorius percepta occasione suae ecclesiae cardinales, si tamen consentirent, satis voluntarie proveheret, neminem prorsus quantacunque necessitate coactus, violenter promovere certabat ne sub huiusmodi occasione quemquam eliminando deponere videretur."

as to send to Rome qualified representatives. But though these delegates waited long about the Lateran, none came to meet them from the clerical side. It seems that the policy of the clergy was to get the election postponed as long as possible, and therefore, instead of appointing deputies, they endeavoured to amuse the Pope with long letters full of ingenious excuses and evasions. Thus matters continued at a deadlock. But it was now the May of 593, and Gregory's fund of patience was entirely exhausted. He was determined to be trifled with no longer, and ordered his agent in Campania to bring strong pressure to bear on the refractory clergy. "If, by chance, any try in any way to set aside your admonition, let them be subjected to ecclesiastical discipline. For whoever is not willing to consent to my plan will give evident proof of his own wickedness." At the same time, foreseeing that an election must inevitably be made shortly, Gregory allowed Paul to return to Nepi, giving him, as recompense for his labour, a hundred solidi and a little orphan boy.[1]

The Pope's firmness at length produced an effect. The tardy delegates of the clergy arrived in Rome, and in concert with the lay representatives chose as bishop one Fortunatus, who was consecrated by Gregory in the summer of 593, after the see had been vacant for two years. The end of the whole affair is marked by an earnest letter from the Pope to the newly consecrated prelate. "We have received the letter of your Love, in which you informed us that, by the goodness of God, you have been well received by your sons the citizens of Naples. For this we render thanks to Almighty God. It is your duty now to repay their affection by your good conduct, to restrain the wicked, to unbend with all kindness and discretion to the good, to admonish the people frequently to choose the better part, that so they may rejoice to find in you the character of a father, and you, by God's help, may fulfil with more than ordinary zeal the duties of the office entrusted to you."[2]

[1] *Epp.* iii. 35.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 60. I may add that the friendly relations between the bishop and his people were fairly well maintained for some five years. In 598, however, Fortunatus, who appears to have been a meddlesome, ambitious man, ventured to interfere in an unwarrantable manner with the privileges of the municipal officials, and seized on certain duties on gates and aqueducts, to which he had no rightful claim. The mayor of Naples, resenting this

It was not in Naples only that Gregory overlooked the episcopal elections. In some places, owing to the discord or negligence of the electors, he found that vacant sees were not filled up, and he used all his influence to hasten an election. Thus the clergy and people of Perugia were rebuked for their apathy: "We wonder, brethren beloved in Christ, why you see with indifference the Church of God so long without a ruler, and why you think so lightly of the rule which should be over you and all the people. It is well known that the flock, left without a shepherd's care, wanders from the right way and falls more easily into the snares of the enemy. It is therefore necessary that, with the fear of God before your eyes, you should choose from among the soldiers of your Church one who can worthily receive the office of pastor, who can, by God's help, stand among you as the steward of the divine mysteries, and offer every day for the children of your Church the sacrifice of a pure mind, and show to his flock the path by which they may reach the heavenly fatherland." [1] The electors of Aleria in Corsica were yet more slack than those of Perugia, having allowed the see to remain void for several years. In this case Gregory took the matter into his own hands, and on his own responsibility appointed as bishop Martin, who had hitherto presided over the unknown devastated see of Tainatis.[2] In Sicily, again, there were some bishoprics left vacant from a different cause. It had become customary, when a prelate was deposed for an offence, to keep his see open, in case he might at any future time be permitted to return to it. This practice Gregory determined to put down, believing that it lowered the character

invasion of his own prerogatives, appealed to Gregory. And this was the beginning of a fresh series of tumults. An ecclesiastical party supported the bishop, and a municipal party rallied round the mayor, and a serious disturbance seemed imminent. Gregory, realizing that in the excited state of popular feeling no satisfactory settlement was likely to be arranged at Naples, ordered Fortunatus to send a proctor to Rome, that the question in dispute might be investigated there, and settled either by arbitration or else by judges appointed by the Pope (*Epp.* ix. 47). But Fortunatus chose to ignore these directions. After a month's interval, therefore, Gregory wrote again, ordering him without excuse or delay to restore the duties, and to refrain in future from meddling with municipal matters; if, however, he felt that he had any real claims, he might still send a representative to Rome, where his pretensions would be fairly investigated (*ibid.* ix. 76). How the affair ended we have no means of knowing.

[1] *Epp.* i. 58.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 79.

of the episcopate, and also that it encouraged the criminal to indulge in hopes of restoration and so distracted his thoughts from his penitential duties. He therefore charged his representatives in Sicily to select in all such cases fit persons from the clergy or monks of the diocese, and to send them to Rome to be consecrated. If no fit persons could be found, the Pope took upon himself to nominate to the vacant see.[1]

Once more, it sometimes happened that the suffrages of the electors were given to some one who was incompetent for the position. In such cases Gregory had no scruple in rejecting the elected candidate and ordering the clergy and people to make another choice. Thus he refused to accept the favourite candidates for the bishoprics of Locri[2] and Sorrento.[3] In 591, again, when the see of Rimini fell vacant, and the people chose a certain Ocleatinus, Gregory wrote: "We do not accept Ocleatinus, and the people must not think of him any more. Inform the citizens that if they can find any one in the Church who is fit for the office, they ought to elect him by common consent; if not, the bearer of this letter, to whom I have spoken on the subject, will suggest the name of an acceptable candidate."[4] The men of Rimini, in this instance, preferred to act independently, and chose, in the place of Ocleatinus, a subdeacon of the Roman Church named Castorius, who was also a friend and *protégé* of the Archbishop of Ravenna. Gregory was not pleased with the choice, but he found himself unable to resist the importunities of the electors, backed by a strongly worded recommendation from the archbishop.[5] So Castorius was consecrated bishop. But, as the Pope had feared, the election was not a success. For scarcely had Castorius been ordained, than the people of Rimini repented of their choice; and when the new bishop arrived in his diocese he met with an extremely rude reception. The hostility and insubordination of his flock so preyed upon his mind, that in a little while his health broke down completely.[6] On the plea of illness he quitted his city, and afterwards nothing could induce him to return. Submissive deputations from the citizens and strong pressure from the Pope were equally unavailing to overcome his dread of the place where he had suffered so much, and

[1] *Epp.* i. 18. [2] *Ibid.* vii. 38. [3] *Ibid.* x. 7.
[4] *Ibid.* i. 55, 56. [5] *Ibid.* ii. 28. [6] *Ibid.* iii. 24, 25.

at length, after an absence of four years, he resigned his charge.[1]

Although Gregory had no hesitation in rejecting a candidate when fully convinced of his unworthiness, yet he was very careful to institute the most searching inquiries before proceeding to so extreme a measure, and we have many letters of his, instructing the Roman agents or neighbouring bishops to investigate the character and attainments of such persons.[2] Except when it was absolutely necessary, the Pope was unwilling to interfere in the elections, or in any way infringe upon the freedom of the electors. Such influence as he chose to exert was always secret and indirect. For example, when Maximianus of Syracuse died in 594, Gregory learned that the majority of the voters were in favour of a presbyter named Trajan, whom he believed to be unfitted for the post. He was not prepared, indeed, to veto his election provided that no better candidate was forthcoming; but he privately confided to Cyprian, his agent in Syracuse, his desire that John archdeacon of Catania should be chosen for the office.[3] Cyprian seems to have won over the nobility of the island to Gregory's view, but the clergy and people favoured one Agatho, and the election was accordingly contested. In the end Gregory summoned the rival candidates to Rome, and, after examining each separately, declared himself in favour of John.[4]

Anxious as Gregory was to secure the election of suitable persons to the vacant bishoprics, he was no less careful for the maintenance of discipline among those elected. He kept a sharp watch upon their conduct, and was unsparing in his censure when anything displeased him. In some of his letters we get some odd portraits of sixth-century prelates. The following, for instance, is a sketch of Paschasius, who was elected bishop of Naples in the year 600, and of whose dilatory and negligent conduct the Pope had already had occasion to complain.[5] "We have learnt that our brother, Bishop Paschasius, is so indolent and neglectful of everything, that no one would suppose from his conduct that he was a bishop at all. He bestows no love or care on his Church, or on the monasteries in

[1] *Epp.* ix. 138.
[2] See *e.g. ibid.* ii. 24; vii. 38; x. 13; xiii. 14; xiv. 12.
[3] *Epp.* v. 20. [4] *Ibid.* v. 54. [5] *Ibid.* xi. 53.

his diocese, or on the people in general, or on the poor who are oppressed. He gives no help to those who implore his protection in a just cause; and, what is even worse, he utterly refuses to listen to the advice of wise men, from whom he might at least learn what he cannot discover for himself. The cares of his pastoral office are thrown aside, and he unprofitably devotes his whole attention to shipbuilding, by which, it is reported, he has already lost 400 solidi or more. In addition to his other faults, it is said that, in the company of two or three ecclesiastics, he goes down daily to the sea-shore in so mean a guise, that he is the laughing-stock of his own people, and appears to strangers so mean and contemptible that they consider him entirely destitute of the qualities which befit the dignity and character of a bishop." Gregory ordered that the unsatisfactory prelate should be publicly rebuked by the Roman agent in the presence of some of the priests and nobles of the diocese, and that, if he made no change in his behaviour, he should be sent to Rome, "to learn what a bishop ought to do and how he ought to do it." [1]

Andrew bishop of Taranto, again, ill treated his clergy, and caused a poor woman on the roll of those supported by his Church [2] to be cruelly beaten with rods. For this offence Gregory directed him to abstain from celebrating mass for two months. But a still graver crime was laid to his charge. "We know for a fact," writes Gregory, "that you once had a concubine. And with regard to her, certain people still suspect you. As, however, we ought not to pronounce judgment in a doubtful case, we choose to leave this matter to your own conscience. If, after taking Holy Orders, you have had intercourse with her, you must resign your office and on no account presume to minister as a bishop. On your own soul be the peril if, having committed this crime, you conceal it and retain your office. You will certainly have to render an account to God. And we exhort you, if you have been entrapped by the devil's wile, to overcome him while you may with fitting

[1] *Epp.* xiii. 29.

[2] "Mulierem de matriculis." "Matricula dicebatur canon seu liber in quo descripti erant qui ecclesiae sumptibus alebantur. Inde matricularii dicti. Erant autem pauperes, orphani, viduae quae matriculariae appellabantur." Gussanvillaeus.

penitence, and so avoid being made a partner in his lot at the judgment day." [1]

A gentle reproof was administered to the well-meaning but vain and talkative Bishop of Reggio: "I have learnt, my brother, from some persons who come to Rome, that you are very earnest in works of charity, and I thanked God for it. But I must own that I was not a little troubled by the circumstance that you yourself have mentioned your good deeds to many; for this has shown me that your object was to please, not God, but man. Wherefore, my dear brother, when your outward actions are good, you should guard with special care the goodness of the heart, lest the desire of pleasing men creep in, and all your labour in well-doing become of no avail. For what are we, if we seek to please men—what but dust and ashes? Seek rather, my brother, to please Him whose advent is close at hand, and of whose recompense there can be no end." [2]

The above extracts, perhaps, leave us with a not altogether favourable impression of the clergy of the sixth century. But before we form any definite judgment respecting their morals and manners in this period, it will be well to collect some additional evidence, and to cite briefly a few more instances of ecclesiastical failings and misdemeanours. To begin with the bishops. Festus of Capua was a weak prelate, universally despised, who, moreover, was so avaricious that he defrauded his own archdeacon, though a poor man, of ten solidi.[3] Pimenius of Amalfi, instead of residing in his episcopal city and attending to its defence against the Lombards, went gadding about to foreign places, setting a bad example to his people, who also preferred to live away and leave their old homes to be spoiled by the enemy.[4] Benenatus of Misenum fraudulently diverted to his own use moneys provided for building fortifications.[5] A bishop of Sipontum allowed his nephew, who was guilty of rape, to go unpunished.[6] Basilius of Capua spent his whole time in carrying on legal suits, "as though he were one of the dregs of the people." [7] Palumbus of Cosenza grossly neglected the interests of his Church, allowing its property and plate to be plundered, and even

[1] *Epp.* iii. 44.
[2] *Ibid.* iii. 4.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 34; v. 27.
[4] *Ibid.* vi. 23.
[5] *Ibid.* ix. 121; cf. ix. 163.
[6] *Ibid.* iii. 40, 42.
[7] *Ibid.* x. 4.

permitting one of the serfs belonging to it to be seized in his presence and carried off into slavery.[1] The clergy of Reggio made a formal complaint against their bishop, requesting that he might be summoned to stand his trial in Rome.[2] The Bishop of Nicotera was condemned to several years' penance for his offences[3]; so also was Exhilaratus bishop of Palermo.[4] Demetrius of Naples, Lucillus of Malta, and Agatho of Lipari were deposed for their crimes.[5] Of the bishops of Campania Gregory writes: "They are so negligent and unmindful of the dignity and character of their office, that they have no care for their churches or their people. They do not concern themselves about the monasteries, and give no protection to the poor and oppressed."[6] Nor were the lower ranks of the clergy much better than their superiors. The clergy of Reggio were shamefully neglectful of their duties[7]; those of Cagliari despised and disobeyed their bishop[8]; those of Luna were guilty of grave irregularities[9]; those of Ravenna, relying on the Exarch's protection, involved themselves in serious crimes[10]; those of Malta tried to cheat the African Church of the rent of lands which they held[11]; those of Naples were arrogant, factious, and disobedient[12]; those of Norcia had women living with them[13]; those of Venafro sold their Church plate to a Jew.[14] So again, to quote a few individual instances, a deacon of Ancona received a deposit of money which he refused to restore[15]; a cleric of Cagliari fraudulently seized on a widow's property which had been left to a monastery[16]; the archdeacon of the same place lived openly with women[17]; a deacon of Naples was proved to have lent money upon usury[18]; a cleric named Paul, detected in malpractices, fled to Africa and lived as a layman[19]; a subdeacon, Hilarus, was guilty of bringing false accusations[20]; a presbyter of Norcia was condemned for scandalous violence.[21]

It seems clear from the above that the general behaviour

[1] *Epp.* ix. 122.
[2] *Ibid.* ix. 129, 134.
[3] *Ibid.* ix. 120.
[4] *Ibid.* xiv. 4.
[5] *Ibid.* ii. 5, 51; iii. 53; ix. 25; x. 1.
[6] *Ibid.* xiii. 31.
[7] *Ibid.* iv. 5.
[8] *Ibid.* iv. 25; ix. 203.
[9] *Ibid.* iv. 22.
[10] *Ibid.* iii. 54.
[11] *Ibid.* ii. 43.
[12] *Ibid.* iii. 35.
[13] *Ibid.* xiii. 38, 39.
[14] *Ibid.* i. 66.
[15] *Ibid.* ix. 51.
[16] *Ibid.* ix. 204.
[17] *Ibid.* iv. 26.
[18] *Ibid.* x. 19.
[19] *Ibid.* iv. 24.
[20] *Ibid.* xi. 53.
[21] *Ibid.* xiii. 39.

of the Italian clergy at this time was far from satisfactory. On the other hand, we must take care not to exaggerate the corruption. The offences with which the Italians are charged are often little more than breaches of decorum and ecclesiastical etiquette, and even the worst cases cannot for a moment be compared with the flagrant crimes which are attributed to the French clergy of this period,[1] or to the Italian clergy of the Middle Ages. A comparison of clerical manners, as represented by Gregory of Tours and Gregory of Rome, would result in a verdict distinctly favourable to the ecclesiastics of Italy. Nevertheless, it seems clear that, in the sixth century, we may observe the beginning of that corruption in Italian ecclesiastical circles, which culminated in the scandalous licence of the tenth and eleventh centuries. The levity and neglect of duty which were found to be so widespread in the suburbicarian provinces were significant signs of a degeneracy, which already, like a disease, had fastened upon the Italian priesthood, and which even the genius of Gregory was unable to cure. For the moment, indeed, by his vigorous action, the decline was arrested; but it was beyond the power of any single man to avert it altogether.

While the Pope himself superintended the conduct of the bishops, summoning those accused of misdemeanours to appear before him at Rome,[2] or, in less serious cases, before his agent or other bishops specially commissioned to act as judges,[3] he was generally content to leave in the hands of the bishops both the election and the government of the rest of the clergy. At the same time, he constantly urged upon the bishops the duty of maintaining strict discipline in their dioceses, and specially commended those who, like Theodore of Lilybaeum (Marsala), were diligent in so doing.[4] Sometimes, however, whether in response to an appeal or in consequence of information received, Gregory felt bound to interfere in the interests of order. Thus, to take a single example, it was reported to him that a certain deacon of Cagliari named Liberatus, was accustomed wrongfully to take precedence of

[1] See below, Vol. II. pp. 54, 55.

[2] *E.g.* Januarius of Cagliari, Leo of Catania, Gregory of Girgenti, Exhilaratus of Palermo.

[3] *E.g.* Lucillus of Malta, Bonifacius of Reggio.

[4] *Epp.* iii. 49.

the other deacons, thereby causing much jealousy and heart-burning among the clerics of Cagliari. Gregory, hearing this, wrote at once to Januarius, ordering that Liberatus, unless he had been made cardinal-deacon by the last archbishop, should no longer presume to take the foremost place, but, in punishment of his presumption, should be made to stand last of all the deacons.[1] That the overworked Pope, in the midst of his multitudinous occupations, should have made time to adjudicate on a small matter of clerical etiquette, is a remarkable proof of the thoroughness with which Gregory discharged what he conceived to be his duty. Nothing connected with the maintenance of discipline was considered by him to be too small or trifling to merit his attention.

While Gregory was principally concerned with the spiritual interests of the clergy under his charge, he did not neglect their temporal welfare. His thoughtfulness and kind consideration may be illustrated by one or two examples. When Capua was in the hands of the Lombards, and the revenues of the Church were plundered, the Pope ordered that the Capuan clergy, who had fled to Naples, should still be paid their accustomed stipends, presumably from the treasury of the Church of Rome. "Those who serve the Church," he wrote, "should, when possible, be helped by the Church."[2] Again, hearing that Agatho, the deposed bishop of Lipari, was in want, Gregory ordered that fifty solidi should be given him from the treasury of his former Church, that destitution might not be added to his other punishments.[3] A similar provision was made for a lapsed cleric who was doing penance at Palermo.[4] Again, when Calumniosus, a cleric of Orvieto, fell ill, Gregory directed that his salary should be paid him without diminution.[5] To Ecclesius, bishop of Chiusi, who suffered from the cold, but was too poor to buy winter clothing, he sent a warm cloak.[6] In other ways also, Gregory's thoughtful care was manifested. When Abbat Trajanus was made bishop of Malta, Gregory made a special arrangement that four or five of his monks should accompany him to his diocese, that the bishop might have some old friends about him in his new home.[7] Another abbat, Urbicus, Gregory refused to consider

[1] *Epp.* i. 81. [2] *Ibid.* v. 27. [3] *Ibid.* iii. 58. [4] *Ibid.* i. 18.
[5] *Ibid.* ii. 11. For a somewhat similar case, see *ibid.* iv. 3.
[6] *Ibid.* xiv. 15. [7] *Ibid.* x. 1. For a similar instance, see *ibid.* vi. 20.

as a nominee for the vacant bishopric of Palermo, because he was unwilling to disturb his monastic quiet.[1] Again, being informed that Cosmas, a Sicilian subdeacon, was unhappy in the parish where he resided, Gregory directed that he should be removed and made a cardinal-presbyter of the Church of Syracuse.[2] By such attentions the Pope won the hearts of his clergy. He made them feel that the interests of all of them were considered at Rome. And his wise policy did much to strengthen the ties which bound the provincial clergy to the Papacy.

Much of Gregory's work in connection with the suburbicarian dioceses consisted, of course, in mere business routine. He was required to append his signature to innumerable documents authorizing the consecration of churches and oratories and monasteries,[3] the deposition of relics,[4] the rebuilding of churches destroyed by fire,[5] the erection of episcopal residences,[6] the use of baptisteries,[7] the wearing of the pallium,[8] the unification of churches,[9] and the like. Several examples of these formulae will be found among Gregory's letters, some of them of considerable interest as illustrating the ecclesiastical organization of the period. Here, however, there is only room to quote a single document, and I select as typical one which authorizes a bishop to consecrate a church. The conditions insisted on are noticable.[10] "Januarius, deacon of the Church of Messina, has informed us in the subjoined petition, that, as a mark of his devotion, he has founded a basilica in Messina, which he wishes to be consecrated in honour of SS. Stephen, Pancratius, and Euplus. Therefore, my dear brother, if this place forms part of your diocese, and it is ascertained that no bodies are buried there, receive first of all the donation in legal form, that is to say, ten solidi a year free of tax, and the rest of the property of which only the income shall be retained by the founder during his lifetime. Inquire carefully into all this, and if the annual income which is now offered, or which shall remain after the founder's death, be sufficient for the repair of the building, for

[1] *Epp.* xiii. 14.
[2] *Ibid.* xiii. 32.
[3] *Ibid.* ii. 15; iii. 58; v. 50; ix. 58, 71, 180, 233; xiii. 18.
[4] *Ibid.* ix. 45, 59, 181; xi. 19, 57.
[5] *Ibid.* vi. 43.
[6] *Ibid.* viii. 1.
[7] *Ibid.* xiii. 24.
[8] *Ibid.* v. 61; vi. 8, 18; xiii. 40.
[9] *Ibid.* ii. 48; iii. 20; vi. 9.
[10] *Ibid.* ii. 9.

the lights, and for the support of the ministers, let the deed of gift be duly enrolled in the municipal records. Unless you attend carefully to these directions, be assured that you or your heirs will have to provide for the requirements of the church out of your own property. When, then, the necessary arrangements are made, let the church be consecrated. But on no account perform the dedication until the deed of gift is completed on the terms above indicated, with the usual express provision that the founder has no further right in the church, save the common right of publicly worshipping therein. You will further receive from him the relics and with due reverence place them in the basilica."

It remains now to speak of certain regulations of Gregory affecting particular points of Church life and discipline.

(*a*) *The relation of the clergy to women.*—In the last year of the sixth century, Gregory addressed himself to putting an end to a scandal which had become widespread in the Church. It was notorious that many of the clergy, "under pretext, as it were, of help and comfort," had taken women to live under their roof; by which practice, even though no sin were incurred, yet their reputation suffered, and "an occasion for detraction was given to scoffers."[1] This custom Gregory determined to put down, and in February, 599, he sent a circular order to the defensors of the Papal Patrimonies, instructing them to take instant measures for its suppression.[2] In future no bishop was to be allowed to have women living in his house, save such as were permitted by the canons,[3] namely, a mother, sister, aunt, or others of whom there could be no suspicion. "Yet the bishops will do better if they refrain from living even with such as these. For we read that the blessed Augustine refused to live even with his sister, saying, 'Those who are with my sister are not my sisters.'"[4] Such a precept, however, was admittedly a counsel of perfection, and Gregory says: "We bind, indeed, no

[1] For instances, see *Epp.* i. 50; iv. 26; ix. 218; xiii. 38, 39; *Dial.* iii. 7. Compare also Hieron. *Ep. ad Eustoch.* 22; Cyprian *Epp.* 4, 13, 14; Basil *Epp.* 198; Greg. Nyssen. *De Virg.* 23; and Chrysostom's two homilies, "*de iis qui subintroductas virgines habent.*" See also Muratori *Anecdot. Graec.* p. 218, *sqq.*

[2] *Epp.* ix. 110.

[3] *Council of Nicaea*, c. 3. For others, see Bingham, vi. 2, 13; Smith *Dict. Ch. Ant.* "Subintroductae." Compare Justinian's legislation, *Cod.* i. 3, 19; *Novel.* 123, c. 29; 137, c. 1.

[4] Possidii *Vita S. Augustini* 26.

one in this matter against his will, but like a doctor we prescribe great carefulness for the sake of salvation, though the measure may be temporally unpleasant. Therefore we lay down no binding rule, but if any choose to follow the example of a learned and holy man, we leave it to their own free will." For the rest, the bishops in their turn were ordered to admonish those in Holy Orders in their dioceses to observe the same rule, "this only being added, that these, as the canons decree, abandon not their wives, whom they ought to govern in chastity."

This last clause raises the question of clerical marriage. Since the time of Pope Siricius it had been unlawful for bishops, priests, and deacons of the Roman Church to marry after their ordination. But the question early arose—What was to be the relation of these clergy to the wives whom they had lawfully married previous to their ordination? Now, the Fathers of Nicaea had refused to direct that they should cease cohabitation.[1] Nevertheless, as early as 305, the Council of Elvira decreed that cohabitation was unlawful,[2] and in the Roman Church abstinence was, it seems, made binding by Pope Siricius at the end of the fourth century.[3] Still, even in the sixth century, such a rule was not enforced in the case of presbyters and deacons either in the East or in Africa; and, if we may judge from the series of conciliar decrees, as well as from the incidental references of Gregory of Tours,[4] it was very laxly kept in Gaul. Even in Italy it was sometimes broken. We read, for instance, of a deacon of Naples who was a candidate for the bishopric, and was rejected by Gregory because he had a daughter. "What presumption!" exclaims the Pope. "How dare he aspire to the episcopate, when his little daughter proves that he was but recently overcome by incontinence?"[5] But in Italy, though instances of its infringement are not wanting, the regulation was on the whole observed that bishops, priests, and deacons, after their ordination, should have no further intercourse with their wives. In the *Dialogues* there is a curious story of a presbyter who for forty years, from

[1] Socrat. *H. E.* i. 11; Sozom. *H. E.* i. 23. [2] Canon 33.

[3] Siricius *Ep. ad Himerium*, c. 7. (Labbe, ii. p. 1019); cf. Leo I. *Epp.* 167, c. 3.

[4] Gregory gives two remarkable instances of the rule being observed in the case of bishops (*De Glor. Confess.* 76, 78). But the stories imply that cohabitation was regarded as permissible for presbyters. [5] *Epp.* x. 19.

the time of taking Orders, lived separate from his wife, "loving her as a sister, but avoiding her as an enemy," and who even forbade her to approach him on his death-bed. "Holy men," comments Gregory, "have this characteristic, that in order to avoid what is unlawful, they cut themselves off even from what is lawful."[1]

The Roman regulation about cohabitation Gregory enforced in the case of the three higher orders of the ministry,[2] and he further endeavoured to make it binding upon all subdeacons, though in their case he was willing to proceed gradually. It is true that in enjoining abstinence on subdeacons Gregory made no innovation. Already for some time the subdeacons of the Roman Church had been forbidden to cohabit with their wives; and in 589 Pope Pelagius the Second, desiring to secure uniformity of practice, had peremptorily ordered the Sicilian subdeacons to follow the same rule, giving those who were married the choice, either of abstaining from intercourse with their wives, or of refraining from the exercise of their official duties. This decree had apparently caused much dissatisfaction in Sicily, and even to Gregory it seemed to be hard and improper, inasmuch as it enforced an obligation which had not been undertaken at the time of ordination, and so, perhaps, led to the commission of a greater sin. He therefore modified the order, prescribing that for the future no one should be ordained subdeacon who would not engage to live in chastity: of those already ordained, such as had obeyed the injunction were to be praised and rewarded, but such as had disobeyed were not to be deprived of their office. Nevertheless, the latter were to forfeit all hope of promotion; "for no one ought to approach the ministry of the altar whose chastity has not been proved before he is admitted to that ministry."[3] The same rule was also enforced by Gregory on the clergy of Reggio,[4] and, we may conjecture, throughout all the suburbicarian dioceses. Clerics not in Holy Orders, however, were permitted to marry and live with their wives.[5] Indeed, in a certain case Gregory even forced one such cleric to take back a wife whom he had deserted on the pretext that she was of servile condition.[6]

[1] *Dial.* iv. 11.
[2] *Epp.* ix. 110; xi. 56*a*.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 42; iv. 34.
[4] *Epp.* iv. 5.
[5] *Ibid.* xi. 56*a*.
[6] *Ibid.* vii. 1.

It may be added that, in accordance with the ancient practice of the Church, Gregory strictly forbade the ordination of any one who had been married twice, or who had married a widow or a divorced woman. Widows of clerics, moreover, were not permitted to take a second husband.[1]

(*b*) *The relation of the clergy to the lay tribunals.*—Gregory was strongly averse to the clergy being mixed up in secular concerns. He desired as far as possible to keep Church and State apart, to let the ecclesiastical organization and the secular organization subsist side by side, neither infringing upon the province of the other.[2] Hence he took up a very decided attitude on the question of ecclesiastical courts. Now, by the law of Justinian, bishops could not be brought before the civil magistrates for any cause, pecuniary or criminal, without the Emperor's special order; the rest of the clergy were exempted from the jurisdiction of the secular courts in respect of ecclesiastical and lesser criminal charges, but were not exempted in respect of greater criminal charges (such as murder, rebellion, and the like), nor yet in the case of civil pecuniary suits with laymen, when the latter were unwilling to go into the bishop's court. Thus when a presbyter or deacon was defendant in a lesser criminal suit, he was judged by the bishop or the bishop's representatives, but when defendant on a grave criminal charge, or in a civil controversy with a layman, he could be forced to appear in the secular courts. It seems, however, that even the legal exemption of the clergy from the jurisdiction of the secular courts was not always respected. At any rate, we find Gregory frequently insisting that accusations against clerics must be heard only in the bishop's court, when the bishop should either deliver judgment himself, or, if suspected of bias, should appoint a commissioner to see that the litigants chose referees, and that the case was thus properly settled by arbitration.[3] While, however, Gregory fought for the right of the bishop to preside at the trials of his clergy, he at the same time urged the episcopal judges to abstain from provoking the litigants by distressing delays and remands,[4] and to arrange that judgment,

[1] *Epp.* iv. 34; xiv. 5.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 39*a*; ix. 53, 76; x. 4.

[3] *Ibid.* vi. 11; xi. 24. Arbitration seems to have been a favourite way of settling disputes (*ibid.* i. 61; ii. 47; ix. 41, 61, etc.).

[4] *Ibid.* vi. 11.

when given, should be promptly executed.[1] If a bishop was himself the defendant, the case was to be heard by his metropolitan or patriarch, or, in default of these, it was to be referred to "the Apostolic See, which is the Head of all the Churches."[2]

Besides the right of presiding at trials in which their own clergy were defendants, the bishops had by Imperial law further powers in determining causes. If two parties in a civil suit agreed to go into an ecclesiastical instead of a secular court, the bishop had power to adjudicate, and his decision was final and was duly executed by the secular authorities. Moreover, even in criminal cases, though the bishops could not themselves act as magistrates, they had nevertheless the right of interceding for accused persons, and such intercession was rarely rejected. Gregory entirely approved of this practice, and often, through his agents, made use of it himself; yet he was anxious that it should not be abused. "It has come to our ears," he wrote to one of his agents,[3] "that certain men of little discernment desire to implicate us in their risks, and wish to be defended by ecclesiastical persons in such a way that the ecclesiastical persons themselves may be bound by their guilt. Wherefore, I admonish you by this present injunction, and through you our brother and fellow-bishop the Lord John, or others whom it may concern, that (whether you receive letters from me or not) you exercise the patronage of the Church with such moderation, that if any be implicated in public peculations, they may not appear to be unjustly defended by us, lest by our indiscreet defence we transfer to ourselves the bad name of evil-doers. But so far as becomes the Church, by admonitions and by speaking words of intercession, succour whom you can, so that you may give them assistance without staining the repute of the Holy Church." Gregory's general rule was that the bishops should refrain from mixing themselves up in secular causes, "except in so far as the necessity of defending the poor compels them to do so."[4]

Closely connected with the right of intercession were the further privileges of protecting the weak and oppressed, and of providing asylum. In the Letters there are several instances of the *sacerdotalis tuitio*. Thus one bishop was ordered by

[1] *Epp.* xi. 32.
[2] *Ibid.* xiii. 50.
[3] *Ibid.* ix. 79.
[4] *Ibid.* i. 39*a*.

Gregory to protect a certain Sinceris, who, having abstained from touching his late father-in-law's effects, refused to be responsible for his debts, and was in consequence molested by the creditors[1]; another bishop was commanded to arrange a dispute about the servile status of a woman[2]; the bishop of Syracuse was ordered to punish a man who had violently separated one of his female slaves from her husband, and sold her[3]; the bishop of Civitavecchia was directed to protect Luminosa, widow of a Tribunus, and see that she was not disturbed for the rest of the year in the exercise of the *cometiva* held by her late husband.[4] The following letter to Peter, Rector of the Sicilian Patrimony, is typical[5]: "As we have no desire to infringe the privileges of laymen in their judgments, so, when these judgments are iniquitous, it is our desire that you resist them with moderate authority. For to restrain the violence of laymen is not to act against the law, but to support the law. Since then Deusdedit, the son-in-law of Felix of Orticellum, is said to have done violent wrong to the bearer of these presents and to be still unlawfully detaining her property (the dejection of her widowhood not moving his compassion, but confirming his malice), we charge your Experience to give her protection against the aforesaid man and in all other matters in which she suffers wrong. Let no one oppress her. Do not neglect this which, without prejudice to equity, we have commanded you, or compel widows and other poor persons, who can get no assistance with you, to undergo the expense of making the long journey hither to us."

In respect of the privilege of asylum, Gregory's intentions are quite clear. Asylum was to be used to further the interests of equity and justice, and not to screen malefactors from punishment. If the refugees were slaves, Gregory directed that, in case they had any just cause of complaint against their masters, a proper arrangement was to be made for them before they left the sanctuary. In case they had committed a venial fault, they were to be given up to their masters after receiving a solemn promise of pardon.[6] The breaking of such a promise was punished

[1] *Epp.* vi. 33. [2] *Ibid.* viii. 20. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 12.
[4] *Ibid.* i. 13. [5] *Ibid.* iii. 5.
[6] *Ibid.* iii. 1: "Si iustam contra dominos suos querellam habuerint, cum congrua ordinatione de ecclesiis exire necesse est. Si vero venialem culpam

with excommunication. If the refugees were free men, they were persuaded to leave the sanctuary by the pledge of a fair trial, and it was the bishop's duty to see that those who so left it suffered no unjust treatment.[1] In Gregory's day it was not unusual for Government officials to take sanctuary when the time came for them to hand in their accounts. Gregory's desire in all such cases was to give the suppliants the opportunity of standing their trial "without apprehension of being oppressed." As he constantly reminds his correspondents, the sanctuary is not a protection for the guilty, but only a guarantee of fair and just treatment.[2]

(*c*) *The position of lapsed clergy.*—Such clerics as were proved guilty of criminal or scandalous offences were punished by being deprived of their Orders and reduced to the status of laymen. Deprivation was regarded as the clerical equivalent of lay excommunication, clerics being punished thus for the offences which in a layman would be punished by excommunication. In aggravated cases, however, the penalty of excommunication was sometimes imposed in addition to the deprivation. But whether deprived merely, or deprived and excommunicated also, the lapsed cleric was never permitted by ecclesiastical law to resume his clerical office and functions, but was obliged to continue as a layman to the end of his life. In the early centuries, it is true, we meet with a few cases in which the severity of this rule was mitigated. But these were instances of peculiar privilege and dispensation. The general rule of the Church made degradation (as distinct from suspension) absolute and final.

commiserint, dominis suis accepto de venia sacramento sine mora reddantur." Cf. the decree of Gelasius quoted by Ewald *in loc.* For Gregory's regulations concerning the slaves of Jews, see below, Vol. II., pp. 157, 158.

[1] *Epp.* x. 17.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 35; ix. 4, 182; xi. 4, 16. I note that in Gaul the right of asylum was frequently violated (Greg. Tur. *H. F.* iii. 36; iv. 13; v. 50; vi. 11, 17; vii. 22), although bishops did their best to defend it (*ibid.* v. 4). It was, however, considered impious to put to death criminals taken from a church (*ibid.* ix. 3, 38). Sometimes suppliants were starved out, being deprived of food and drink (*ibid.* iv. 18). King Chilperic, when it was reported that Merovech was going to take asylum in St. Martin's Church, caused all the entrances to be closed, save one for the clergy (*ibid.* v. 19). A man who tried to drag his enemy out of a church was smitten with blindness (*Mirac.* ii. 10).

Against any modification of ecclesiastical law in this matter Gregory resolutely set his face. He believed that the restoration of lapsed clergy would be subversive of discipline and dangerous for morals, and he therefore insisted on carrying out the law in all its stringency. "If licence of restoration be granted to the lapsed," he wrote to the Archbishop of Milan,[1] "the force of ecclesiastical discipline is undoubtedly broken, and in their hopes of restoration ill-disposed persons have no scruples in giving rein to their wicked inclinations. Your Fraternity has consulted us on the question whether Amandinus, ex-presbyter and ex-abbat, who for his faults was degraded by your predecessor, should be restored to his rank. This thing is not allowable, and we decree that it cannot be done on any account. Nevertheless, though he is altogether deprived of his sacred office, yet, if his manner of life deserves such favour, you may assign him a place in the monastery above the other monks, as you may see fit. But above all things take care that no man's supplication persuade you in any way to restore the lapsed to their Sacred Orders, lest they come to regard the punishment of degradation, not as an absolute penalty, but as a mere temporary expedient." So again Gregory wrote to the Archbishop of Cagliari[2]: "It has come to our knowledge that some in Sacred Orders who have lapsed are recalled to their ministerial office, after doing penance, or even before. This thing we have altogether forbidden, and the most sacred canons also declare against it. Whosoever, then, after having received any Sacred Order has lapsed into sin of the flesh, must utterly forfeit his Order and never again approach the ministry of the altar." This, then, was Gregory's invariable rule,[3] applied by him

[1] *Epp.* v. 18. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 26.

[3] There was at one time some controversy over a passage, "de lapsis clericis," contained in Greg. *Epp.* ix. 147, and quoted by Rabanus Maurus *Lib. Paenit.* c. 1. In this passage Gregory is represented as saying, "post dignam satisfactionem credimus posse redire ad honorem," in support of which opinion a number of irrelevant citations from Scripture are adduced; then, "si ovis perdita errans post inventionem ad ovile humero reportatur, cur iste post paenitentiam ad ecclesiae ministerium lapsus non revocetur?" With such a sentiment contrast Gregory's real opinion (*Epp.* iv. 26; v. 18; vii. 39, etc.). Anselm, *Epp.* i. 56, tries to reconcile these passages by suggesting that Gregory refused restoration to clerics convicted of open sins, but granted it to those guilty of secret sins of which they had secretly repented. But it is inconceivable that Gregory should really have drawn any such distinction. The

equally to bishops,[1] presbyters,[2] deacons,[3] and subdeacons.[4] In one case it was reported to him that a deprived presbyter had ventured to officiate and to offer the Holy Sacrifice. Gregory decreed, that if this was true, the presbyter in question should remain excommunicate to the day of his death, unless his behaviour as penitent was exceptionally good, when he might be restored to lay communion at the discretion of his bishop.[5]

Two further points in connexion with Gregory's treatment of the lapsed are to be noticed. The first is, that he drew a very sharp distinction between lapsed clergymen and lapsed monks. A presbyter or deacon who was deprived of his Orders forfeited them irrevocably; an abbat who was degraded for the same sin might, after fitting penance, be restored to his rank. Thus again a single person, who was both presbyter and abbat, and who had been degraded, could never again exercise the priestly office, though he might resume his monastic dignity.[6] The reason of this distinction is, of course, the idea that only those of unsullied character should be allowed to approach the altar for the celebration of the Holy Mysteries.

The second point is that Gregory usually insisted that degradation should be followed by confinement in a monastery and rigorous penance.[7] Thus he wrote to his agent in Sicily: "In respect of lapsed priests or any of the other clergy, we desire you to keep yourself free from fault in dealing with their property. Seek out the poorest regular monasteries which you know to be well conducted, and there consign the lapsed to penance, and let the property of the lapsed go to the benefit of the place where they are confined, to the end that those who have the charge of their correction may themselves get some good by their means. But if the lapsed have relations, let their property go to their relations, after deducting an allowance for the monasteries where the lapsed are consigned for penance. If, however, any of the family of the Church shall have lapsed,

passage in *Epp.* ix. 147 (printed in small type by Ewald and Hartmann), is now generally acknowledged to be a forgery interpolated into a genuine letter, probably in the eighth century.

[1] *Epp.* i. 18; vii. 39; ix. 25; xii. 10, 11.
[2] *Ibid.* v. 5, 17, 18; viii. 24; ix. 25.
[3] *Ibid.* iv. 26; v. 17, 18; xii. 3.
[4] *Ibid.* v. 17.
[5] *Ibid.* v. 5.
[6] *Ibid.* v. 17, 18; cf. v. 4; xiv. 2.
[7] *Ibid.* i. 42; iii. 49; v. 18; ix. 25; xii. 3.

whether priests, levites, monks, clerics, or any other, it is our will that they be consigned to penance, but that the Church retain its claim on their property. Yet let them be given for their use sufficient to maintain them during their penance, lest, if they be left destitute, they be a burden to the monasteries to which they are consigned. If any have relations on the estates of the Church, let the property be delivered to them to hold subject to the Church's claim."[1]

(*d*) *The revenues of churches.*—The revenues of each Church were in the first instance under the disposition of the Bishop, who, however, in the sixth century usually administered them through agents. In the Letters of Gregory we find that the general charge of the property fell to the Archdeacon, who was responsible for all losses to the treasury of his Church, and was obliged to make them good out of his private estate. Hence he had power to interfere even with the action of the bishop, if the latter was bent on turning the revenues to improper uses.[2] Again, in order to relieve the overtaxed archdeacon, the details of the administration of the ecclesiastical property were committed to an officer who bore the title of Oeconomus, or Church Steward, whose duties were to see to the building and repair of churches, to provide for the proper cultivation of Church lands, to pay the stipends of the clergy, to distribute alms, conduct law-suits, and take charge of the property and revenues of the Church during a vacancy. The Council of Chalcedon had decreed that every Church should maintain one of these officials,[3] but in Gregory's Letters they are not often referred to. An oeconomus was directed by Gregory to manage the funds of the see of Salona during a vacancy[4]; and the oeconomus of Cagliari, together with the archpresbyter of the church, was warned to look after the hospitals.[5]

In respect of the distribution of the revenues, it had long been the rule in the Roman Church to divide them into four parts—one for the bishop, a second for the clergy, a third for the poor, and the fourth for the repair of the fabric of the church. This fourfold mode of distribution had been decreed by Gelasius,[6] and was recognized and enforced as law by

[1] *Epp.* i. 42. [2] *Ibid.* i. 10; ii. 20-22. [3] Canon 26.
[4] *Ibid.* iii. 22. [5] *Ibid.* xiv. 2.
[6] Gelas *Epp.* 9, c. 27 (Labbe, iv. p. 1195).

Gregory.[1] Thus he ordered Felix of Messina to give his clergy the customary payments,[2] and the bishop of Palermo to allow his clergy their fourth part.[3] Again, when Augustine wrote from England to ask how the Church funds were to be distributed, Gregory replied that it was the custom of the Roman Church to divide them into four portions—for the bishop, the clergy, the poor, and the fabric; since, however, Augustine was a monk, he was not to subtract a portion for himself, but was to live in common with his clergy.[4] But though Gregory insisted on the fourfold distribution as the general rule, still questions respecting the application of the rule arose from time to time, on which the Pope was required to pronounce judgment. For instance, he learned that in certain churches in Sicily a custom had grown up, which was really an infringement of the "canonical distribution in four parts." For the bishops, while distributing in the legal fashion all the old revenues of their Churches, retained for their own use all revenues recently acquired. This practice Gregory ordered to be discontinued, and all revenues—whether old or newly acquired—to be divided in the authorized fashion.[5] Again, a question arose whether a Visitor during a vacancy ought to receive the episcopal fourth or not. Gregory laid down the principle that a Visitor ought to receive payment for his services[6]; and in one case ordered the whole of the episcopal fourth part to be given him.[7] As a rule, however, the remuneration was not so great, but was fixed according to circumstances.[8]

The bishops, then, were obliged to adhere to the "canonical disposition" in paying out their funds; nevertheless, they still retained considerable discretionary powers in respect of the details of the distribution. For though each bishop was compelled to divide the total revenues into four equal parts, he could subdivide as he pleased, and could distribute the fourth part allotted to the clergy according to his private judgment of the claims and merits of each individual. The clergy of Catania once complained to Gregory of their bishop's method in doing this. It had been the custom in this Church to assign two-thirds of the clerical fourth to the clergy in Sacred

[1] *Epp.* v. 48.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 64.
[3] *Ibid.* xiii. 46.
[4] *Ibid.* xi. 56*a*.
[5] *Ibid.* iv. 11.
[6] *Ibid.* iv. 11.
[7] *Ibid.* v. 12.
[8] *Ibid.* iii. 35; v. 48.

Orders, and one-third to the rest of the clerics. But Bishop Leo did exactly the opposite, apportioning one-third to the higher clergy, and two-thirds to those in Minor Orders. The case seemed a hard one, yet Gregory refused to interfere. All such administrative details, he believed, were best left to the discretion of the bishop.[1] Such a power, however, was of course liable to abuse, and in some cases the clergy endeavoured to secure their own interests by compelling their bishops to sign charters of rights, which were afterwards confirmed by the Pope. The clergy of Palermo, for example, extracted from their bishop an agreement, in which he engaged to give them their full fourth part without unnecessary delay, and to distribute it among them, not by favour, but "according to the merits, the official standing, or the good work of each." The bishop further contracted to surrender to the clergy a full fourth, not only of the revenues, but also of the offerings of the faithful, whether in money or in kind, to have his accounts published annually, to permit clerics to buy wine from the Church estates at market price, to reclaim all possessions of the Church which were wrongfully retained by strangers, and to be slow in believing evil of his clergy and in punishing them.[2] In a letter from Gregory to Paschasius of Naples, we have an interesting indication of the proportion it was thought right to observe in distributing a sum of money among the clergy and the poor.[3] The amount was divided as follows: 100 solidi to the clerics of the Church, half a solidus apiece to 126 "praeiacentes,"[4] 50 solidi to the foreign clergy, 150 solidi to poor men ashamed to beg, 36 solidi to public beggars. Gregory himself, we may note, was in the habit of making distributions of revenue four times a year.

The bishop had no power to alienate any property belonging to his Church without the consent of his clergy and also of the Pope. The privilege was rarely conceded by Gregory, and, when it was, great precautions were taken to guard against irregularity. Thus Gregory permitted Fortunatus of Fano to

[1] *Epp.* viii. 7; cf. v. 27.

[2] *Ibid.* xiii. 46.

[3] *Ibid.* xi. 22.

[4] Gussanvillaeus interprets "praeiacentes" to mean the clergy "qui ante Paschasii ordinationem ministraverant." Hartmann, however, considers that the senior Neapolitan clergy, the presbyters and deacons, are referred to under this name.

sell his Church plate for the redemption of captives, but he ordered that the sale and the payment of the money should be made in the presence of the Roman agent.[1]

The private property of a bishop who died intestate went to his Church; so also did all property acquired by him after his elevation to the episcopate, whether he left a will or not. A bishop had power to bequeath only such private property as he had acquired before he became bishop or inherited from relatives. All the rest belonged of right to his Church. Such was the rule enforced by Gregory.[2]

Closely connected with the question of Church revenues is the subject of clerical fees. Gregory was anxious to cut these off as far as possible. Already, according to a decree of Gelasius, it was illegal to exact fees for baptism or confirmation [3]; and the Third Council of Braga forbade them to be exacted for the consecration of churches.[4] To these regulations Gregory adhered; but in respect of confirmation expenses he approved of an arrangement made by Pelagius the Second, obliging the parochial clergy to contribute a fixed sum for the remuneration of the attendants of the confirming bishop. Thus Gregory wrote to the bishops of Sicily: "It has been reported to us that in the time of our holy predecessor it was arranged that the priests of your dioceses should not be immoderately burdened when you go forth to seal infants. For a certain sum had been fixed, and, as I hear, with your consent, to be given by the same priests to the clerics who attend you. But this arrangement, then approved of, is not now preserved. Wherefore I admonish your Fraternity to endeavour not to be burdensome to your subjects, and, if they have any grievances, to abate them, seeing that you certainly ought not to have departed from the arrangement that was agreed upon." [5] Gregory further forbade fees to be levied for ordinations, marriages of inferior clerics, or the veiling of virgins, though he permitted the bishops to accept a gift if spontaneously offered.[6] Moreover, he strongly condemned the exaction of fees for burying-places. "You know our ordinance,"

[1] *Epp.* vii. 13.
[2] *Ibid.* ix. 142; xii. 14. Compare also *ibid.* iv. 36; v. 23; vi. 1; ix. 75.
[3] Gelas. *Epp.* 9, c. 5 (Labbe, iv. p. 1189).
[4] Conc. Bracar. iii. c. 5 (Labbe, v. 897).
[5] *Epp.* xiii. 22.
[6] *Ibid.* iv. 24.

he wrote to a bishop.[1] "We have entirely forbidden this old custom in our Church, and no one is permitted to purchase a burial-place for a price. For if the men of Sichem, who were Gentiles, offered Abraham without charge a sepulchre for Sarah's body, and were scarcely prevailed upon by his importunities to receive a price for the burial-place, ought we who have the name of bishops to make a charge for burying the bodies of the faithful?" Again, he wrote to Januarius of Cagliari yet more strongly[2]: "It is very wrong and unbecoming your priestly office to ask a price for earth granted to rottenness, and to wish to profit by another's grief. Wherefore I admonish you never in future to presume to be so avaricious even in the case of a stranger. But if at any time you allow any one to be buried in your church, and the parents, relatives, or heirs of the deceased should of their own accord desire to offer something for the lights, we do not forbid you to accept it. But we do forbid outright any demand or exaction of money—which is most contrary to religion—lest the Church be called venal (which God forbid!) and you, by trying to profit by men's bodies, should seem to take a joy in their death." The general practice of giving presents to bishops Gregory discouraged, and in this respect he himself set an example by refusing all such gifts whenever possible.[3] On one occasion a bishop sent him some costly robes embroidered with palm branches. But Gregory sold them, and sent their price back to the donor for the poor of his diocese.[4]

Such, then, were the regulations enforced by Gregory in the Churches of his metropolitanate and of Sardinia. We have now to consider his relations with some of the other Churches of the West.

[1] *Epp.* viii. 3.
[2] *Ibid.* viii. 35.
[3] *Ibid.* v. 16.
[4] *Ibid.* i. 64.

CHAPTER V

GREGORY PATRIARCH OF THE WEST. HIS RELATIONS WITH OTHER WESTERN CHURCHES

BESIDES his regular jurisdiction within the suburbicarian provinces, the Pope at this time exercised a somewhat irregular authority over a much wider area, including Northern Italy, Gaul, Africa, Illyricum, and Spain. As early as 343 the Council of Sardica had entrusted the Bishop of Rome with a certain limited power of receiving appeals, decreeing (if, indeed, the canons are genuine) that a bishop, condemned by a provincial synod, might appeal for a new trial to the Pope, who should have power to delegate the hearing of the appeal to the bishops of the next adjacent province, and should, if he wished, send legates of his own to assist in the proceedings. The germ of what may be styled a supreme appellate jurisdiction thus created at Sardica, was developed by a law of Gratian, which enacted that all Western metropolitans, when accused, should be tried at Rome, or by judges appointed by the Pope, and that all Western bishops might, if they chose, appeal to Rome, or else to a synod of fifteen neighbouring prelates. The celebrated rescript of Valentinian the Third went still further. It gave the Pope an absolute authority over Western bishops, and decreed that his decisions should be enforced as law on contumacious bishops by the secular magistrates. This jurisdiction received by the Popes from the Emperors had no proper canonical basis, and from the ecclesiastical point of view was null and void. Nevertheless, it was a power to be reckoned with, at any rate in those countries where Imperial law remained in force.

In the sixth century, the whole of Gaul and the greater part of Spain had ceased to form part of the Empire. Hence,

in these regions, we observe that the authority of the Pope, no longer supported by the secular arm, was considerably weakened; although the prestige of the see of the Prince of the Apostles was such that even the most independent bishops were unwilling to come to any open breach. In the other Western countries which still belonged to the Empire, the bishops found it, on the whole, expedient to defer to the Pope's authority, although we meet with cases of contumacy on the part of some who could reckon on the support of the Imperial officials. In what manner Gregory endeavoured to strengthen and extend the Papal power in the West, and what measure of success attended his endeavours, will appear from the following detailed account of his relations with the principal Churches.

(*a*) *The Church in Spain.*

Of all the provinces in the West which had formerly belonged to the Roman Empire, Spain, in the time of Gregory's pontificate, was, perhaps, the most settled and tranquil. The period of the invasions was happily over, and the Visigoths had established themselves securely in the land which they had conquered. It is true that for some time after the Visigothic invasion the country had continued unquiet. In the north the Suevi, Basques, and Cantabrians, encouraged by the Franks, were in constant revolt. In the south, the Byzantines, who had their head-quarters at Cordova, were ever intriguing against the Visigothic conquerors. The Catholic provincials throughout the country were discontented with the Arian Government; and the Gothic nobility, often masters of strong and important cities, were continually at war with one another and with their king. "The Goths," says Gregory of Tours, "have learned the detestable habit of killing their king whenever he displeases them, and putting another, whom they prefer, in his place."[1] The accession of Leovigild, however, in 568, entirely changed the aspect of affairs. This ambitious and exceedingly able monarch, by a series of energetic measures, built up the Gothic state on the basis of a strong and vigorous monarchy. In the first place, he crushed the external enemies of the kingdom. The Byzantines were driven back to the

[1] Greg. Tur. *H. F.* iii. 30; cf. Fredegar. *Chron.* 82.

coast districts. Then Cantabria was subdued, and finally, says John of Biclaro, "he possessed himself of the nation of Suevi, their treasures, and their country, and converted them into a province of the Goths."[1] At the same time, he kept down with a strong hand the turbulent and savage nobles—those "tyrants," as John calls them—who troubled the peace of his kingdom from within. "Leovigild," says Gregory of Tours,[2] "killed all those who had made a habit of killing their kings, without leaving a male among them." He established his capital at Toledo, where, in imitation doubtless of the Byzantine Emperors, he held his court with considerable pomp and splendour. "He was the first king of the Goths"—so Isidore tells us[3]—"who wore a regal robe and sat upon a throne. For, up to his time, the dress worn by the kings, and the seats upon which they sat, were of the same kind as those used by the rest of their countrymen."

Leovigild's schemes of consolidation, however, were opposed by one obstacle. This was the Catholicism of the provincial population. The Visigoths were Arians; the subject population was Catholic. Hence the latter tended to sympathize with the Byzantines in the south and the orthodox Suevi in the north, and accordingly constituted a perpetual menace to the safety of the Gothic state. This danger Leovigild determined to remove; but his measures were precipitated by the conversion and rebellion of his eldest son Hermenigild.

In the year 579 Hermenigild married Ingunthis, daughter of Sigibert and Brunichildis of Austrasia, and granddaughter of Goiswintha, Leovigild's second wife. As Brunichildis, herself a Gothic princess and educated as an Arian, had made no difficulty about changing her creed on marrying the Frank king, the Gothic Court expected to find Ingunthis equally complaisant. The little thirteen-year-old bride, however, held fast to her orthodox profession, resisting alike the persuasions of the Arian bishops and the cruel treatment to which her grandmother, Goiswintha, subjected her.[4] At last Leovigild, to put an end to the family dissensions, assigned to Hermenigild (who was already made *consors regni*) the government of the province of Baetica, with Seville as a place of residence. And here, within the year, the young prince—whether owing to the

[1] Joh. Biel. *Chron.* ad ann. 585 (ed. Mommsen).
[2] Greg. Tur. *H. F.* iv. 38.
[3] Isid. *Hist. Goth.* 51 (ed. Mommsen).
[4] Greg. Tur. *H. F.* v. 39.

influence of his wife or to the exhortation of the great Leander of Seville, or from purely political motives—was converted to Catholicism, and confirmed by Leander, under the name of Joannes. It is a remarkable thing that neither of the Spanish authorities—John of Biclaro and Isidore of Seville—makes any mention of this conversion. The evidence of the two Gregorys and of Paul the Deacon, however, is sufficient to establish the fact.[1]

The conversion of Hermenigild was followed by rebellion. There can be little doubt that the Catholic and Byzantine parties in Spain co-operated with one another, and used the prince as a convenient instrument for striking a blow at the heretical Gothic monarchy; and we may further conjecture, from the references to the rebellion in the Spanish historians and in Gregory of Tours, that Hermenigild himself was influenced less by orthodox zeal than by the culpable ambition of gaining possession of his father's throne. However this may be, the situation was extremely critical for Leovigild. Unable at once to attack his son, he laid himself out, by concessions, to gain over the Catholic party, or such of them as had not yet been seduced from their allegiance. Heretic though he was, he went to pray in Catholic churches; and to facilitate conversions to Arianism, he summoned an Arian synod at Toledo, by which it was decreed that "it is not necessary that those who come to our Catholic faith from the Roman religion should be baptized, but they are to be purified merely by imposition of hands and reception of the Communion, and are to give thanks to the Father through the Son in the Holy Ghost."[2] By this concession about rebaptism, as well as by liberal bribes and promises, a number of the Catholic clergy were won over, and formally adopted the royal creed.

In 582 Leovigild marched against his son, and his arms were everywhere victorious. Merida, the capital of Lusitania, was the first to fall; Seville, in 584, was taken by storm. Hermenigild, meanwhile, had fled to Cordova, which was in the hands of a Byzantine garrison; and hither the king followed him. But, before the siege could be commenced, the Prefect Comitiolus betrayed the town for a bribe of thirty thousand

[1] Greg. Tur. *H. F.* v. 39; Greg. Magn. *Dial.* iii. 31; Paul. Diac. *H. L.* iii. 21.
[2] Joh. Bicl. *Chron.* ad ann. 580.

solidi. Hermenigild was seized, stripped of his royal dress, and exiled to Valencia. And thus the Catholic rebellion came to an end.

It seems as though Hermenigild, in his exile, continued to intrigue against his father—at any rate, we know that Leander was at this time residing at Constantinople, and doing his best to win over the Court to the prince's interest,—and it has been conjectured that he made an attempt to escape from his exile and flee to the Franks. In any case, however, it is certain that, in 585, he was put to death at Tarragona, though it is doubtful whether the execution was by order of his father or not. John of Biclaro says simply, "Hermenigild was slain by Sisbert, in the city of Tarraco."[1] Isidore does not mention the death of the prince. Gregory of Tours refers to it incidentally as the work of Leovigild.[2] All these writers, it must be remarked, speak with disapproval of Hermenigild, as a "rebel" and "tyrant," and none of them hold him up to admiration as a martyr for the Faith. To do this was left for Gregory the Great.[3] According to the Pope's story, Hermenigild, on account of his conversion, was thrown into a miserable dungeon and loaded with fetters. On the night before Easter Day, an Arian bishop came to give him the Communion, but the prince refused absolutely to receive it at his hands. Then Leovigild sent his *apparitores*, who clove his skull with an axe, and so killed him. Miracles afterwards attested his sanctity. In the silence of the night the sound of psalmody was heard around his body, and, according to another report, lighted lamps were seen; which signs, in Gregory's opinion, established the prince's claim to be venerated by the faithful as a martyr. The Pope adds that Leovigild was afterwards repentant for his deed, and on his deathbed recommended his second son, Reccared, to Leander, imploring the bishop to do with him as he had done with Hermenigild. It was, moreover, "by following his martyred brother's example" that Recarred succeeded in leading his people to the orthodox faith. "And it is no wonder that this king became a preacher of the true faith, seeing that he is the brother of a martyr, whose merits help him in his task of leading so many souls back to the bosom of Almighty God.

[1] Joh. Biel. *Chron.* ad. ann. 585. [2] Greg. Tur. *H. F.* viii. 28.
[3] *Dial.* iii. 31.

Wherein we have to consider that all this could never have come to pass, had not King Hermenigild laid down his life for the truth. One Visigoth died that many might live; one grain was sown in faith that a mighty crop of faithful souls might therefrom spring up."

But Gregory's account of the death of Hermenigild is entirely misleading. The Pope completely ignores the political circumstances which led to the execution, is utterly silent on the subject of the rebellion, and makes the imprisonment and execution follow immediately on the conversion, which is certainly contrary to fact. His tale of Leovigild's repentance and of his committal of Reccared to Leander (who was probably at Constantinople at the time supposed) may, in consideration of the silence of the Spanish authorities, be safely dismissed as unhistorical. The miracles which are said to have followed the execution are obviously legendary. As a matter of fact, Gregory derived his information from Leander and other Spanish exiles at Constantinople, who were doubtless themselves imperfectly acquainted with the circumstances attending Hermenigild's death, and who, for obvious reasons, in speaking of it to Gregory, would keep politics in the background and lay all the stress on the religious aspect of the incident. Such being the case, the majority of critics have no longer any hesitation in rejecting Hermenigild's claim to veneration as a martyr. "A close examination of all the sources," writes Professor F. Görres, "has led me to the conclusion that the supposed martyrdom of Hermenigild cannot be substantiated." But the Roman Church has preferred the Gregorian account to that of the Spanish historians, who alone were qualified to relate the facts. By a brief of Sixtus the Fifth in 1585, the cult of St. Hermenigild was instituted in Spain: Urban the Eighth made it general throughout the Roman Church.

I have dealt at some length with the rebellion of Hermenigild on account of Gregory's connection with the legend of that prince. Now I will pass swiftly on to the great religious revolution effected by Leovigild's successor, King Reccared.

It was probably a political motive that induced Reccared to accept the orthodox creed. He cannot but have realized the immense advantage of conciliating the Suevi and the Catholic provincials and of allying himself with great Catholic prelates

like Leander of Seville and Licinianus of Cartagena, who had such extensive influence in the Byzantine court circles. He saw clearly enough that a unity of faith was the one thing necessary to consolidate the kingdom, which in other respects Leovigild had built up so strongly. And he was not prepared to forego so great a benefit for the sake of a mere religious scruple. Hence, ten months after his accession, he summoned a synod at Toledo, in which he deliberately abjured his Arianism, and induced many of the bishops and nobles to follow his example. Some of the Arians, nevertheless, refused to abandon their faith, and formidable insurrections took place. These, however, were successfully crushed, and in the spring of 589, there was summoned by royal command that famous Council, which was destined to bring about the establishment of orthodoxy in Spain.[1]

In the beginning of May a great assemblage collected at Toledo. There was King Reccared with his Queen Baddo, there were the principal Visigothic nobles and courtiers, there were sixty-two bishops, together with a large number of presbyters and deacons. The general management of the council was entrusted to Leander of Seville and the Abbat Eutropius, and it is probable that the king's great speech was written by Leander. After three days spent in prayer and fasting, Reccared introduced to the assembly, and caused to be recited by a notary, a "tomus" containing an orthodox profession of belief. He declared that God had inspired him to bring back the Gothic nation to the true Faith, and called upon the bishops to complete the work he had begun. He then anathematized Arius and his doctrines, declared his acceptance of the Four General Councils and all other councils that agreed with them, and finally recited the Creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople and the Definition of Chalcedon. When the reading of the tomus was concluded amid the joyful acclamations of the council, one of the Catholic bishops called upon the clergy and nobles converted from Arianism to make a public profession of their orthodoxy. These accordingly recited twenty-three anathemas directed against Arianism, and in their turn repeated the Creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople and the Definition of Chalcedon. When these had been subscribed by eight Arian bishops with their clergy,

[1] Labbe *Conc.* v. p. 997, *sqq.*

and by all the Gothic nobles, Reccared in another speech invited the council to enter upon the consideration of certain canons, particularly one directing that the Creed should be recited at the time of the Holy Communion, that all the faithful might be perfectly acquainted with the articles of their belief. Twenty-three canons were then drawn up and confirmed by the royal edict. The proceedings concluded with a sermon by Leander. "The peace of Christ," he said, "has destroyed the wall of discord which the devil built up, and the house which division was bringing to ruin is united on the one Christ as the corner-stone. Let us all say, then, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.* It only remains that we, being made one people in one mind, should pray to God both to establish this earthly realm and to grant us the felicity of His heavenly kingdom, that the country and people which have glorified Christ on earth may themselves be glorified not only on earth but also in heaven."

After the dissolution of the Council, Leander wrote to inform the Pope of all that had taken place. To this letter Gregory replied in 591:[1] "I cannot express the joy I felt when I learned that our common son, the Most Glorious King Reccared, has embraced the Catholic Faith with most sincere devotion. As you describe his character in your letters, you have made me love him, although he is a stranger to me. But since you know the guile of the old enemy, that he wages a fiercer war with those who have been once victorious, I trust that your Holiness will watch the more carefully over the king, that he may finish what he has well begun; that he may not take pride on the good works he has done; that he may preserve, by the excellency of his life, the faith he has embraced; that he may prove himself by his actions to be a citizen of the heavenly kingdom; and so after many years he may pass from a throne on earth to a throne in heaven."

Among the collected epistles of Gregory there is found one written in very crabbed Latin, that purports to come from King Reccared himself.[2] Gams and Mommsen, however, reject it as a forgery founded on a letter of Gregory to the king. If genuine,

[1] *Epp.* i. 41. With Gregory's praise of Reccared, compare Isidor. *Hist. Reg. Goth.* 55.

[2] *Epp.* ix. 227*a*.

Reccared's letter must have reached Rome some time between the years 596 and 599. It is addressed in respectful terms, "to our Lord, the Holy and Most Blessed Pope Gregory." The king speaks of the anxiety he had felt ever since his conversion to enter into communication with one who was "superior to all other bishops,"—a wish which the cares and occupations of his government had for a long while prevented him from gratifying. After three years, indeed, he had selected some abbats from the monasteries in his kingdom to convey gifts to St. Peter and greetings to the Pope; but the ship in which the abbats sailed was caught in a storm near Marseilles, and driven upon the rocks, and the abbats, who had escaped with difficulty, returned to Spain. Now, however, he had availed himself of the services of a Roman priest who was returning from Malaga, to send this letter, together with a present of a golden cup adorned with jewels.

Gregory sent a very complimentary reply[1]: "I cannot express in words, most excellent son, how greatly I delight in the work you have done, and in the life you lead. When I hear of this new miracle wrought in our own time, the conversion of the whole Gothic nation from the Arian heresy to the unity of the true Faith, I gladly exclaim with the prophet, *This is this change which the right hand of the Most High hath wrought.* Whose heart, however stony, would not, knowing this, be softened with gratitude to Almighty God and with love for your Excellency? I own I often speak to my children here of your achievements, and we often wonder at them with delight. And often are my feelings roused against myself, because I am so sluggish and useless and sunk in listless idleness, while to gain the heavenly fatherland kings are working for the gathering-in of souls. What plea at the terrible judgment shall I offer to the Judge if I come before Him with empty hands, while your Excellency brings with you the flocks of the faithful whom you have led to the grace of the true Faith, by your earnest, your continual proclamation of the truth?" After commending Reccared for his refusal to accept a bribe which the Spanish Jews had offered for the repeal of a law against them, Gregory reminds him of certain virtues, which, both as a private person and as a monarch, he was especially bound to cultivate.

[1] *Epp.* ix. 228.

"But I doubt not," he concludes, "that by God's grace you already practise these virtues. Still, as an opportunity of giving you advice has presented itself, I associate myself by stealth with your good deeds, so that the work you have hitherto done of your own accord, may no longer be yours alone, now that you have been admonished by me to do it. May Almighty God protect you in all your actions by His outstretched arm on high. May He grant you prosperity here, and after many years the joys which are eternal.

"We have sent you a small key from the most sacred body of St. Peter the Apostle, as a benediction from him. In this key is inserted some iron from his chains, so that what bound his neck for martyrdom may deliver yours from all sins. I have also given to the bearer of this letter, as a present for you, a cross containing wood from our Lord's cross and hairs of John the Baptist, that you may always have the help of our Saviour through the intercession of His Forerunner. We have further sent from the See of St. Peter to our very reverend brother and fellow-bishop Leander, a pallium, which is due to him in conformity with ancient custom, and also on account of your good deeds and his own excellence and dignity."[1]

Apart from these letters, Gregory held little communication with the Church in Visigothic Spain. With his old friend Leander, indeed, he corresponded at intervals. The first letter, written in 591,[2] contains an interesting passage respecting the baptismal immersions—a question on which Leander had asked the Pope's advice. "With regard to the trine immersion at baptism, no better answer can be given than the opinion which you have yourself expressed; for so long as there is unity in faith, difference in customs is not prejudicial to the Holy Church. By our Roman practice of three immersions we signify

[1] It is worthy of note that Gregory carefully abstained from interfering in Visigothic politics. Reccared had requested him to write to the Emperor and procure a copy of a treaty concluded between Justinian and Athanagild, defining the rights of the Gothic kings. This, however, Gregory refused to do, partly because almost all the documents relating to Justinian's reign had been destroyed by fire, and partly because, as he discreetly hinted, the treaty in question was not likely to give Reccared satisfaction. "You ought to look in your own archives for the documents which are unfavourable to you, and not ask me to produce them" (*Epp.* ix. 229).

[2] *Ibid.* i. 41.

the sacramental mystery of the three days' entombment, so that when the infant is taken from the water the third time, the resurrection on the third day is symbolized. And if any one should think that the trine immersion is in honour of the Holy Trinity, yet even so there is no harm in dipping the infant only once, since in the Three Persons there is but One Substance. Hence it is indifferent whether we use a single or threefold immersion, for the first represents the Unity and the second the Trinity of the Godhead. Inasmuch, however, as up to the present time the Arians have been accustomed to immerse the infant thrice, I think you had better use the single immersion only, lest while they count the immersions they divide the Godhead, and lest, through the retention of their own usage, they boast of having triumphed over yours." [1]

Four years later Gregory sent to Leander his *Pastoral Rule* and the first and second parts of his *Morals* [2]; and in 599 he despatched to him the pallium, giving him permission to wear it during mass.[3] Whether by this present Gregory meant to confer on Leander the vicariate of the Apostolic See in Spain, is a disputed point. In his letter to Reccared, Gregory said that he was sending the pallium in conformity with "ancient custom"; and Gams argues that there is here a reference to the Apostolic vicariates conferred by Popes Simplicius and Hormisdas respectively on Zeno and Sallustius, archbishops of Seville. The argument, however, is not conclusive, and it is possible that the pallium in this case was nothing more than a mark of honour. Certainly during this period the decoration was not necessarily associated

[1] Compare *Conc. Tolet.* iv. c. 6 (Labbe, v. p. 1706). Trine immersion was the invariable rule in the Roman Church, and was generally practised throughout the Catholic Church in early times. Eunomius seems to have been the first to introduce single immersion (Soz. *H. E.* vi. 26); but in Spain in the sixth century it seems to have become a badge of orthodoxy in opposition to the Arians, who kept to the use of trine immersion.

[2] *Epp.* v. 53. The third and fourth parts of the work had been forwarded to monasteries, and did not reach Spain in Leander's lifetime. About fifty years later, Tayo of Saragossa journeyed to Rome for the express purpose of procuring copies of these missing portions (Taio *Ep. ad Eugenium Episc. Toletan.* Migne *P. L.* lxxx. p. 723). The legend says that Gregory himself, in a vision, revealed to Tayo the place where the manuscripts were concealed. See Migne, lxxv. p. 507, *De inventione librorum Moralium Sancti Gregorii*; Isidor. Pacensis *Chron.* 13 (Migne *P. L.* xcvi. p. 1257); and compare Baronius ad ann. 649, c. 80, *sqq.*

[3] *Ibid.* ix. 227.

with the vicariate. We find, for instance, in Sicily that the pallium was given to the bishops of Syracuse, Messina, and Palermo, while the vicariate was held by the bishop of Syracuse alone. Here, however, the allusion to the "ancient custom" makes it not improbable that the vicariate is meant.

Concerning Gregory's relations with the Church in the Roman parts of Spain, we have scanty information. One instance of Papal intervention, and only one instance, is recorded.

In 603 the defensor John was sent from Rome to try an appeal made by two bishops, Januarius of Malaga and Stephen whose diocese is unknown, against a sentence of deposition and exile pronounced by a council of bishops, at the instigation of an Imperial governor named Comitiolus. In each case—at least according to Gregory's information—the bishop had been treated with gross injustice. Januarius had been forcibly removed from the church in which he had taken refuge; and Stephen, in spite of his protests, had been tried by the bishops of another province. Gregory directed that if it was found that Januarius had done nothing worthy of degradation or exile, he was to be restored to his see without delay, and the bishop who had been intruded into his place was to be degraded and either sent to Rome or handed over to Januarius for further punishment. The bishops by whom Januarius was condemned and his successor consecrated were to be excommunicated for six months, and during that time were to do penance in a monastery. If, however, they pleaded that they had acted through fear of the Imperial authorities, the time of their excommunication was to be shortened and their penance made less severe. In the case of Stephen, John was to inquire carefully into the manner in which his trial had been conducted—to see whether the witnesses and the accusers were different persons, whether the accused was confronted with the witnesses, and had a fair opportunity of defending himself, whether the witnesses were slaves, or poor men, or men of bad character, or such as had a grudge against the bishop. If Stephen was proved innocent, he was to be restored to his diocese, and the bishops who presided at his trial were to be punished in the same way as those who presided at the trial of Januarius. In both cases Comitiolus or his heirs were to restore the episcopal property which had been

illegally carried off. The fact that Comitiolus was probably deceased, and that Gregory contemplated the possibility of Januarius's successor being also dead, seems to indicate that some years had passed since the deposition of the bishops.

The directions given to John concerning this matter are unusually full and detailed. Three documents have been preserved.[1] The first is a Capitulare, or schedule of instructions concerning the case to be investigated and the method of investigation; the second is a collection of Imperial laws, against which, according to the appealing bishops, their accusers had offended; the third was a formula, according to which Januarius, if innocent, was to be acquitted. These documents are suspected of being forgeries; but Hartmann, probably with reason, believes them to be genuine. If we accept them as such, we must recognize that a very extensive authority was still claimed by the Bishops of Rome in the Imperial parts of Spain. How far the Romano-Spanish bishops acquiesced in the Papal interference, however, it is impossible to say. We have no further information about this case. Whether John actually went to Spain, whether he pronounced in favour of the accused prelates, and whether his sentence was ever carried out, we know not.

(*b*) *The Church in Africa.*

At the time of Gregory's accession to the pontificate, Africa for half a century had been reckoned a portion of the Roman Empire, and since 525 the Catholic Church there had been re-established in its ancient rights and privileges. There can be no doubt that this Church had suffered severely through the Arian persecution by the Vandals, and that the number of bishoprics had considerably diminished. Nevertheless, in Gregory's time it was rapidly recovering, and seems, indeed, to have been fairly prosperous. Further, as will be seen, with the revival of its fortunes the African Church had regained much of its old spirit of independence, and Gregory, in his dealings with it, was obliged to proceed with extreme caution. Even so, his attempts to exercise an effective supervision were steadily

[1] *Epp.* xiii. 47, 49, 50. Joh. Diac. *Vita* ii. 11, asserts that Januarius was actually restored.

opposed by the majority of the bishops, who were generally supported in their resistance by the Government officials.

It is remarkable that in none of his letters to the bishops and officials of Africa does Gregory make the slightest allusion to the existence of any Arians among them. All trace of the Vandals and their religion seems to have entirely disappeared; the space of a single lifetime had been sufficient to reduce to insignificance a heresy which had been predominant for more than a century. That Manichaeism was rife in Africa we gather from one of Gregory's letters, in which he forbade the Bishop of Squillace to ordain Africans for fear lest they might turn out to be adherents of that sect.[1] But by far the most important and widespread heresy at this period was that of Donatism.

It is clear from Gregory's correspondence that in Numidia, at any rate,[2] the Donatists were still a numerous and influential body. The Pope laments that the "heresy" was daily gaining ground, that Catholic priests were being turned out of their churches, and that numbers of people, "having obtained leave by bribery," were submitting to rebaptism at the hands of the Donatists.[3] It was even reported that persons who were not only Catholics but actually "religiosi," permitted their children and slaves to be baptized by the bishops of the sect.[4] Meanwhile the Catholic episcopate made no efforts to check the growing schism, but looked on calmly while their flock was being torn by the wolves. Indeed, neglect was not the worst crime with which the Catholics were charged. Argentius, bishop of the Numidian town of Lamigia, was said to have been bribed to appoint Donatists to minister in churches in his diocese[5]; while Maximianus of Prudentiana actually permitted a Donatist bishop to establish himself in his own episcopal city, thereby, in Gregory's opinion, "selling our Lord Jesus Christ to a heretic for a sum of money."[6]

[1] *Epp.* ii. 37.

[2] All Gregory's letters on the Donatists, when they refer to any special part of Africa, refer to Numidia, except *Epp.* v. 3, to Dominicus of Carthage, and even there Gregory plainly indicates that he considers that the affairs of the Donatists belong to other provinces rather than to the proconsular province of Africa. It was, doubtless, local Numidian feeling against the Romanized Carthage that gave such vitality to the schism. The Circumcelliones are said to have spoken only the Punic language.

[3] *Ibid.* ii. 46; iv. 32, 35.

[4] *Ibid.* vi. 34.

[5] *Ibid.* i. 82.

[6] *Ibid.* ii. 46.

To bring this schism to an end, Gregory devoted all his energies. His plan for its repression was carefully thought out. He saw clearly that it would be useless to stir up the secular arm and put into force the Imperial laws against the Donatists, unless at the same time the Catholic bishops could be roused from their inertia to resist the "damnable presumption," each in his own diocese. Gregory's policy, therefore, was twofold. The civil authorities were to be incited to commence a persecution, and the ecclesiastical authorities were to be strengthened from within for an effective co-operation. Thus Gregory hoped that, by the combined efforts of a persecuting Government and a purified Church, the obstinate schism might be finally extinguished.

In pursuance of this line of policy, Gregory, in the first place, made an appeal to the secular officials. According to the strict laws of the Empire, the Donatists laboured under serious disabilities: they were forbidden to assemble for worship, to ordain bishops and clergy, to baptize or convert any one, to serve in the army or to hold any public office.[1] These laws, for the most part, had become a dead letter. But the Pope now exerted himself to get them put into execution. The principal official in Africa at this time was Gennadius, Patrician and Exarch,—a man of distinction, who had achieved some victories over the Moorish tribes that infested the Roman frontiers,[2] and besides this had the credit of being well disposed towards the Roman Church.[3] To him, therefore, Gregory first appealed, and after congratulating him on his successes against the enemies of the Emperor, exhorted him to undertake a still nobler warfare against the enemies of God.[4]

But the Exarch was a cautious politician, and by no means an enthusiast. He had no liking for persecution. So long as the Donatists did not disturb the peace of the province, so long as they paid their taxes and fulfilled their obligations as subjects of the Empire, and above all, so long as they were prepared

[1] *Cod.* i. 5 and 6.

[2] Theophylact *Hist.* vii. 6.

[3] *Epp.* i. 73: "Plurima enim pro pascendis ovibus beati Petri apostolorum principis utilitatibus excellentiam vestram praestitisse didicimus, ita ut non parva loca patrimonii eius propriis nudata cultoribus largitis daticiorum habitatoribus restaurasset." Daticii were barbarians who had given themselves up to the Romans: there is, however, a variant reading, "Daratitiorum."

[4] *Ibid.* i. 72, 73.

to make it worth his while to be lenient, he was quite content to let them alone. Great as was his respect for the Roman See and for Gregory himself, he had no intention of sacrificing to it his own perquisites and popularity, or of running any risk of disturbance and bloodshed. Gennadius, therefore, remained unmoved by Gregory's eloquence; and the Pope, finding that he could effect nothing with the Exarch, turned his batteries on the second official in Africa, Pantaleo the Pretorian Prefect.[1]

"With what rigour the law punishes the execrable wickedness of the Donatists your Excellency is well aware. It is no light sin, then, if those whom the purity of the faith and the severity of human laws alike condemn, find under your rule the means of creeping up again into importance. We have learnt that the audacity of these people has so increased in your province, that not only do they expel with pestilent force the bishops of the Catholic Faith from their churches, but they even venture to rebaptize those whom by a true confession the water of regeneration has already cleansed. If this be so, we are greatly surprised that, while you occupy your present position, such evil men should be able to commit such excesses. Consider, in the first place, what sort of reputation you are likely to have among men, if those who under other governors have been justly suppressed, now under your administration find a way open for transgressing. And in the second place, be assured that God will require at your hand the souls that are lost, unless you correct this evil to the best of your power. Do not take amiss what we say. It is because we love you as our own son that we tell you what we are sure is for your good."

But neither with Pantaleo did the Pope's appeal meet with success.

Meanwhile Gregory turned his attention to the Catholic episcopate in Africa. It seems that the Catholic bishops were as willing as the Catholic officials to live on good terms with their Donatist neighbours, and it was rumoured that they were not less appreciative of the Donatist gold. Peace, toleration, and a lump sum now and then appear to have been their programme. The dangers of the schism they entirely ignored. This venality and want of vigour was, in Gregory's opinion,

[1] *Epp.* iv. 32.

largely accounted for by a vicious ecclesiastical organization, and he hoped that by amending the defects of the system he might strengthen the characters of those affected by the system, and so create a body of bishops willing and able to crush out once for all "the damnable wickedness of the heretics."

With this end in view, Gregory in 591 aimed a blow at the African system of primacies. What exactly this organization was, it is extremely difficult to ascertain. However, from some rather dubious expressions contained in a letter to Gennadius,[1] I arrive at the following conclusions. Each of the provinces of Africa possessed a Primate, a bishop of superior rank to the rest, who presided at the synods and superintended the ecclesiastical affairs of his district. In the proconsular province the Bishop of Carthage was Primate; in the rest of the provinces the dignity was not attached to particular sees, but depended simply on the seniority of the bishops themselves. "Here," says Bingham,[2] "the primacy was not fixed, as in other places, to the civil metropolis, but always went along with the oldest bishop of the province, who succeeded to this dignity by virtue of his seniority, whatever place he lived in. In other parts of the world the bishop of the civil metropolis was commonly metropolitan in the Church also. . . . But in the African

[1] *Epp.* i. 72: "Concilium vero catholicorum episcoporum admoneri praecipite, ut primatem non ex ordine loci postpositis vitae meritis faciat, quoniam apud Deum non gradus elegantior, sed vitae melioris actio comprobatur. Ipse vero primas non passim sicut moris est per villas, sed in una iuxta eorum electionem civitate resideat, quatenus adeptae dignitatis meliori genio resistendi Donatistis possibilitas disponatur." Leo. IX (*Ep.* 84, Migne *P. L.* cxliii.) thus interprets: "In singulis (Africae) provinciis antiquitus primates instituebantur, non secundum potentiam alicuius civitatis, sed secundum tempus suae ordinationis, quibus tamen omnibus praeerat unus scilicet Carthaginiensis archiepiscopus, qui etiam non incongrue dici potest metropolitanus propter Carthaginem metropolim totius Africae." For Ewald's objection to this interpretation, see his note on Greg. *Epp.* i. 72. H. K. Mann (*Lives of the Popes*) writes on this: "Ewald not unnaturally fails to see how *number of years of ordination* can be got out of the words '*ex ordine loci.*' Doubtless, not directly; but, though automatic arrangements, by which ecclesiastical preeminence in a province might be settled, other than that of seniority may be imagined, promotion by age must be acknowledged to be in every way the most likely. If this be conceded, Ewald's difficulty would be solved, and the explanation of Leo IX stand good. For age would settle the position (*ordo*) of the Primates among themselves, and then the senior among them would become the Primate of the first see."

[2] Bingham, ii. 16. 6.

Churches it was otherwise; their rule was to let the primacy remove from city to city, and still go along with the senior bishop, without any regard to the civil metropolis, except only at Carthage, where the bishop was a fixed and standing metropolitan for the province of Africa, properly so called." It thus happened that bishops were elevated to the primacy, not on account of any personal merit or fitness, but simply on account of their seniority in respect of the date of their consecration. Hence the primates were frequently old men, and so deficient in energy; or bishops of unimportant villages, and therefore deficient in authority.

The defects of this system were obvious. To check the encroachments of the schismatics it was of the utmost consequence that the Catholics should be united under the leadership of powerful men. But such leaders were rare, and could only be secured after careful testing of character and capacity. Gregory, therefore, proposed to the African bishops, first, that the primates should in future be chosen, not on account of their seniority, but with regard to the merits of their lives; and secondly, that the primates should reside, "not as the custom is, here and there, in different villages, but in one city, according to their election."[1]

Reasonable as these proposals were, the bishops of Africa regarded them in the light of an encroachment on their prerogatives, and made a stout resistance. The bishops of Numidia, at any rate, sent an expostulation to the Pope, pleading their ancient custom, "which from the very first regulations made by St. Peter, chief of the Apostles, has been preserved through a long course of time down to the present day." And Gregory was too wise to press the point. He knew that it would be useless to engage in an irritating struggle, when the object he had at heart could only be attained by a cheerful co-operation on the part of all concerned. He therefore gave way with the best grace he could, permitting the old custom to be retained, and merely stipulating that in future no bishop who had been a Donatist should on any pretext become primate. "Let it suffice them to take care of the people committed to them, without seeking the first place and the primacy, in preference

[1] *Epp.* i. 72.

to those bishops whom the Catholic Faith has engendered and taught in the bosom of the Church." [1]

But though he yielded in this matter, Gregory did not swerve in his general purpose. He was determined that the Donatists should, if possible, be suppressed, and that, to this end, the more flagrant scandals within the African Church should be remedied. He realized, however, that he had to deal with a clergy of traditionally independent spirit, who were likely to pay but little heed to fulminations issuing from distant Rome. He determined, therefore, to select some influential person on the spot, and make use of his authority to press the question of reform upon the bishops.

Now, there were at this time three prominent prelates in Africa, between whom the choice lay. The first was Dominicus of Carthage, the highest of all in rank and influence. Of this man's character Gregory had a high opinion.[2] He recognized, too, his attachment to the Apostolic See. "Since you know from whence the episcopal organization in Africa was derived," he wrote on one occasion,[3] "you do well, when, mindful thereof, you wisely and lovingly have recourse to the Apostolic See, which is the origin of your own, and continue steadfast, as you ought, in your affection for it." We have several letters written by Gregory to Dominicus in a tone of warm friendship and esteem. Nevertheless, the Pope did not see fit to make Dominicus his Vicar. Possibly he distrusted the bishop's capacity for leadership; possibly he was unwilling to increase the authority of one who was already so powerful; more probably he feared that the Numidian bishops, jealous as they

[1] *Epp.* i. 75: "Et nos quidem iuxta seriem relationis vestrae consuetudinem, quae tamen contra fidem catholicam nihil usurpari dinoscitur, immotam permanere concedimus, sive de primatibus constituendis, ceterisque capitulis; exceptis his, qui ex Donatistis ad episcopatum perveniunt, quos provehi ad primatus dignitatem, etiam cum ordo eos ad locum eundem deferat, modis omnibus prohibemus. Sufficiat autem illis, commissae sibi plebis tantummodo curam gerere, non autem etiam illos antistites, quos catholica fides in ecclesiae sinu et docuit et genuit, ad optinendi culmen primatus anteire."

[2] See *Epp.* ii. 52; v. 3; vi. 19, 60; vii. 32; x. 20; xii. 1; xiii. 31.

[3] *Ibid.* viii. 31: "Scientes praeterea, unde in Africanis partibus sumpserit ordinatio sacerdotalis exordium, laudabiliter agitis, quod sedem apostolicam diligendo ad officii vestri originem prudenti recordatione recurritis et probabili in eius affectu constantia permanetis." For the alleged Roman origin of the African Church, compare *ibid.* i. 75.

were of Carthage, would be inclined to resist any influence brought to bear on them from that quarter. At any rate, whatever may have been the reason, Dominicus was passed over. The second candidate was Adeodatus, Primate of Numidia, a feeble old man, whose age and weakness alike precluded him from being entrusted with any additional responsibilities. The third candidate, on whom the Pope's choice fell, was a certain Columbus, a Numidian bishop, whose see is not recorded. This prelate possessed all the qualifications necessary for the discharge of the duties that were now to be laid upon him. His excellent character was universally acknowledged, his spirit and energy were highly commended by Gregory, above all, he was "utterly devoted, mind and heart and soul," to the Roman See.[1] The confidence which Gregory reposed in him may be estimated from the following extract from a letter to Adeodatus[2]: "Above all others, you should in all matters take counsel with our brother and fellow-bishop Columbus. For we believe that if you act by his advice no one will have the least occasion to find fault with you. Know also that it will be as acceptable to us as if you acted by our own advice. For the life and manners of Columbus have been so approved by us in all things, that we are certain that anything done with his consent will be darkened by no stain of fault." Such was the man whom Gregory chose to act as his informal Vicar in Africa.[3]

In the August, probably, of 593 a synod was held in Numidia under the presidency of Adeodatus. Columbus was instructed to press on the assembled prelates the duty incumbent on them of resisting the Donatists, and also of purifying the Catholic ministry by the exclusion of boys and immoral persons from ordination, and by the suppression of bribery and secular influence at episcopal elections.[4] But the council does not appear to have been a success. For in the September of the same year we find Gregory writing to the Exarch Gennadius, that frequent complaints have reached him from Africa, that "many things are being done in the Council of Numidia contrary to the usage of the Fathers and the ordinances of the canons."

[1] *Epp.* iii. 47. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 48.

[3] Columbus was never formally entitled Vicar, nor did he receive the pallium, probably because Gregory was unwilling to appear to put any slight on the primate Adeodatus.

[4] *Ibid.* iii. 47, 48.

He accordingly urged Gennadius to assist Columbus to enforce discipline, concluding his letter in characteristic fashion: "If you desire victories, most excellent son, if you are anxious to secure the safety of the province committed to your charge, nothing will help you more than an increase of zeal in the lives of the bishops, and the suppression by your means of intestine warfare among the Churches." [1]

In 594 Gregory wrote in very urgent terms to Columbus and to Victor, who had succeeded Adeodatus as Primate of Numidia, to hold another council, and take immediate measures against the growing evil.[2] But neither did this council, if it was held, produce much effect. Certainly two years later we find Gregory renewing his old complaints about the spread of Donatism, and the wickedness of the Catholics who permitted their slaves and children to be baptized by the schismatics. On the whole, we may conclude that the synods held in Numidia in the first four years of Gregory's pontificate failed to accomplish any notable result, though they may have been effectual in arousing the zeal of individual bishops.

In the same year 594 a council was held at Carthage against the Donatists. The Emperor, possibly at Gregory's instigation, had sent strict orders to Africa that the schism should be suppressed. Dominicus accordingly convoked a synod at Carthage, at which it was decreed that any bishop who was negligent in searching out and punishing heretics should be degraded from his rank and should forfeit his property. As this was meant to apply to the bishops of all the African provinces, Gregory was somewhat apprehensive lest the primates of the provinces should take umbrage, and he urged Dominicus to be careful not to do anything which might lead to discord, since in that case it would be impossible to combine the forces of the faithful and successfully combat the schism.[3]

Although the Emperor's decree was received in Africa, it does not appear to have been acted upon. Zealous bishops came to Rome, complaining that the laws of God and the commands of the Augustus were equally disregarded, and that they themselves had suffered persecution on account of their zeal for the Faith. Gregory sent these bishops on to Constantinople, with an urgent letter from himself to Maurice (August, 596)[4]:

[1] *Epp.* iv. 7. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 35. [3] *Ibid.* v. 3. [4] *Ibid.* vi. 61.

"Amid the cares of warfare and the numberless anxieties which you endure in your unwearied zeal for the government of the Christian commonwealth, it causes myself, and indeed the whole world, great delight that your Piety ever watches with special care over the custody of that Faith which makes the Empire of my Lords so resplendent. Whence I feel the fullest confidence, that, just as you champion the cause of God with religious affection, so God champions and assists yours with the grace of His Majesty. How greatly your Serene Piety, out of regard for righteousness and zeal for the true religion, has been moved against the impious wickedness of the Donatists, the tenour of the commands you have sent most clearly shows. But most reverend bishops coming from the province of Africa, assert that these commands have been disregarded by carelessness or connivance, and that neither is the judgment of God feared, nor, so far, have the Imperial decrees been put into effect. They add, moreover, that the bribes of the Donatists so prevail in the province that the Catholic Faith is publicly put up to sale. On the other hand, the Glorious Gennadius has complained to me of one of those who made these complaints, and two others bore him out on the same matter. But since in this case a secular judge was concerned, I have thought it right to send these bishops to your Piety, that they may in person inform you of what, as they say, they have endured for the Catholic Faith. Wherefore, I beseech you, my Most Christian Lord, for the salvation of your own soul and the life of your most gracious offspring, to issue strict orders for the punishment of such persons, and to arrest with saving hand the fall of the perishing, to apply the balm of correction to minds insane, and to expel from them the venom of error, so that, while by the remedies of your godly care the darkness of pestilential wickedness is expelled, and the true Faith sheds her bright rays in these lands, you may have laid up for you a heavenly triumph in the presence of our Redeemer, because you not only defend men from outward enemies, but also, what is a yet more glorious achievement, preserve them from the venom of diabolic fraud within."

After this there is no further mention of the Donatists in Gregory's letters. Possibly the Pope's vigorous action may have frightened them into a less obtrusive resistance to the Catholic Church, and possibly both the ecclesiastical and the

secular authorities became more vigilant against the spread of the schism. At any rate, there were no more flagrant and notorious scandals to call for notice from Rome. Nevertheless, though the Donatists may have declined in numbers and importance, the sect certainly did not become extinct until half a century later, when all forms of Christianity alike were submerged beneath the flood of the Mohammedan invasion.

Gregory's attention was constantly directed to the concerns of the Church in Africa, and the number of his letters to the bishops and officials is considerable. Here, however, I have space to allude only to two cases, each of which presents some singular features, and also illustrates the relationship which subsisted at this time between the Churches of Africa and of Rome.

First, there is the affair of the bishop Paul.[1] A certain African bishop named Paul, whose diocese is unknown, became involved in difficulties, owing to his zeal against the Donatists. He had apparently made an attempt to persecute them, but they instead had succeeded in persecuting him. He then tried to visit Rome to lay his grievance before the Pope, but his desire was baulked, apparently by the agency, or at least with the connivance, of the Imperial officials. Even when the Pope sent letters to Gennadius and Pantaleo, Victor and Columbus, ordering that the bishop should be sent to the threshold of St. Peter without delay or opposition, no notice was taken of his injunction. Two years, indeed, elapsed, and the persecution of Paul increased. The Exarch was his enemy. Possibly the bribes of the Donatists had something to do with it; possibly Paul, who seems to have been a rash and impulsive person, had uttered indiscreet remarks about the Exarch's want of vigour. At any rate, some charges were trumped up, Paul was found guilty and excommunicated, and Gennadius sent to Rome a formal complaint of the bishop's misdemeanours, together with an official notice of his excommunication. Paul, on his side, denied all the charges, and declared that his unpopularity was occasioned simply and solely by his zealous defence of the Catholic Faith. At the same time, he supplied the Pope with a deal of information, apparently on matters connected with the government of Africa,—"all which things," Gregory darkly

[1] For this affair, see *Epp.* iv. 32, 35; vi. 59, 61; vii. 2; viii. 13, 15.

hints to the Exarch, "since this is not a fit time to mention them, we have thought best to keep to ourselves."

Meanwhile Paul managed to elude his enemies and escaped to Rome. He was followed, however, by a deacon of Columbus to explain the action of the Church in Africa, and by the chancellor of Gennadius to justify the conduct of the Exarch. The deacon loitered on the way, and arrived too late to be of any use; the chancellor refused to accuse the bishop in person, but he brought forward three persons belonging to Paul's diocese, who were, however, of such mean quality that Gregory refused to hear them. Matters being thus at a deadlock, Paul obtained the Pope's permission to repair with a couple of friends to Constantinople, to lay his case before the Emperor. But it seems that his affair went no better at Constantinople than in Africa and Rome, and in the beginning of 598 he once more appeared before the Pope, with the charges against him still unresolved. Owing to the difficulty of obtaining trustworthy evidence, Gregory refused to exercise jurisdiction; but, with the bishop's own consent, he sent him back to Africa, and ordered Columbus to try the case and give a just and unbiassed judgment. How the affair ended we do not know.

In this case there are one or two notable features. In the first place, it proves that there was an independent party in Africa who disapproved of reference being made to Rome on provincial questions. This independent party, further, was supported by the Government officials, who had their own reasons for disliking Papal interference. Their action in forcibly preventing Paul from leaving his diocese to confer with the Pope was by no means unique, but was merely a part of the general policy of independence, and had been adopted before on similar occasions.[1] Again, it is significant of the independent spirit which prevailed in the African Church, that, when the sentence of excommunication was launched against Paul, Gregory was not informed of it by the Primate of the province, but was left to learn it casually from the letter of a layman. "I greatly wonder," wrote the Pope,[2] "that this news

[1] Thus in 591 Gregory had written to Gennadius: "If any of the Council of Numidia desire to visit the Apostolic See, permit them to do so, and hinder any who may be disposed to prevent their journey" (*Epp.* i. 72).

[2] *Ibid.* vi. 59.

is announced to me in a letter from your Excellency, and not by the Primate." Lastly, it is noticeable that the final trial took place, not in Rome but in Africa, and that it was Columbus and not Gregory who pronounced sentence.

Another curious incident is that of the Primate of Byzacium.[1] Crementius or Clementius, Primate of Byzacium, was accused of certain crimes by his bishops, who even went to Constantinople to prosecute their case against him. The Emperor ordered Gregory to take cognizance of the matter. But Theodore, a Magister-Militum, having been bribed with ten pounds of gold, prevented this being done, probably by hindering the parties involved from leaving Africa. A second rescript from the Emperor then commanded Gregory to commission some one to hear the case in Byzacium, and pronounce judgment in accordance with the canons. Gregory, however, on account of the strength of the opposition, was very unwilling to take action. But meanwhile the Primate, who was apparently somewhat alarmed by the persistent attacks of his suffragans, deigned to send the Pope a statement couched in humble terms, the sincerity of which Gregory took leave to doubt. "As to his saying that he is subject to the Apostolic See, I know of no bishop who is not subject to it when any fault has been committed. But when no fault exacts this submission, all are equal by the law of humility."

At last it was arranged that John, bishop of Syracuse, should arbitrate. And to him Crementius despatched a proctor, named Martin, with instructions to proceed subsequently to Rome to satisfy the Pope. Martin, however, remained in Sicily, though both he and John sent to Gregory unsatisfactory letters concerning the case. The former wrote a very superficial account, glossing over everything that was really important, while John's letter proved nothing save the writer's profound ignorance of all the essential points. The result was that Gregory, on his own admission, could understand nothing whatever of the quarrel; and, after a little while, the case was quietly shelved. Rather more than three years afterwards, however, the Pope's attention was again drawn to the matter, and in 602 he ordered the bishops of Byzacium to assemble in council and thoroughly investigate the allegations against their

[1] See *Epp.* ix. 24, 27; xiii. 12.

Primate. But, as in the case of Paul, we have no information how the matter ended.

Here once more we have to note Gregory's moderation and his unwillingness to interfere more than was necessary in the affairs of the African Church. Not only did he refrain from exercising his own right of jurisdiction, though expressly commissioned to do so by the Emperor, but he referred the matter, not to Columbus or any adherent of his own, but to the bishops of the province of the accused Primate. Thus he effectually stopped the mouth of the party of independence. At the same time, in his charge to the bishops of Byzacium, he showed clearly that he considered the affair as belonging to the jurisdiction of the Roman See.

Such appears to have been Gregory's invariable policy in his dealings with the Church in Africa.[1] There can be no doubt

[1] See, for instance, his method of dealing with other complaints and appeals to Rome. The most important of these are as follows: Constantius and Mustelus complained that Maximianus of Prudentiana had allowed a Donatist bishop to establish himself in his own episcopal city. Gregory ordered the charge to be investigated by a council of bishops, in the presence of Columbus and of Hilarus, the agent of the Papal Patrimony. If the bishop was proved guilty, he was to be deprived and excommunicated; if innocent, the informants were to be punished (*Epp.* ii. 46). Again, Felicissimus and Vincentius, deacons of the Church of Lamigia, complained that they had been unjustly treated by Bishop Argentius, who was also alleged to have appointed Donatists to the care of Churches, and to have been guilty of sundry unnamed crimes. Gregory commissioned Hilarus to arrange for a council being summoned to investigate the charges, and to see that the decisions were duly carried out (*ibid.* i. 82). Again, a presbyter named Adeodatus complained that his bishop had deprived him of his parish, from which he had been absent owing to illness. Gregory instructed the Primate of Byzacium to examine the case, and, if it appeared that the desertion of Adeodatus had been really occasioned by illness, to reinstate him without delay (*ibid.* iv. 13). Again, a certain Peter came to Rome in 596, and unfolded a piteous tale of wrongs, for which he demanded redress. An inquiry, however, showed that Peter's representations did not harmonize with facts, and the conduct of the petitioner caused the Pope much distress. This case was entrusted to Columbus for full investigation (*ibid.* iv. 34). Again, a bishop named Crisconius complained that, without fault of his own or ruling of a synod, a part of his diocese, together with some property belonging to his Church, had been appropriated by another bishop. Columbus and Victor of Numidia were ordered to investigate and rectify what was amiss (*ibid.* viii. 14). Again, Donadeus, a deacon, complained that he had been unjustly deposed by Bishop Victor. Gregory ordered Columbus to inquire into the matter, in concert with the Primate and other bishops (*ibid.* xii. 3). Once more, the clerics of Tegesis complained bitterly of the savage cruelty with which their bishop, Paulinus, was accustomed to punish their faults. This prelate was also accused of simony. The

that in theory he claimed supreme authority over the African bishops; but he realized that such a claim could not in practice be substantiated. The African episcopate was far too independent to tolerate Roman interference: and even Columbus was exposed to hostile attack on account of his relations with the Pope.[1] Gregory therefore, except in the matter of the Donatist schism, thought it best to intervene as little as possible. Wherever he encountered determined opposition—as in his proposed reform of the primatial system, he yielded at once. At the same time, he did everything in his power to allay the suspicion which was generally felt respecting the aims of the Roman See. "Just as we defend our own rights," he wrote to Dominicus,[2] "so we preserve those of the several Churches. I do not through partiality grant to any Church more than it deserves, nor do I through ambition derogate from any what belongs to it by right. Rather I desire to honour my brethren in every way, and study that each may be advanced in dignity, so long as there can be no just opposition to it on the part of another." Thus by tact and discretion Gregory managed to keep up a show of authority over the African bishops, though he had little real power. Even in the sixth century the Church in Africa had not learnt the lesson of submission to the successors of St. Peter.

disaffected clergy appear to have first applied to Columbus, but, failing to get relief, appealed to the Pope. Gregory, however, referred the matter back to Columbus and Victor of Numidia (*Epp.* xii. 8, 9).

With regard to all these cases I observe: (1) Not many bishops appealed to Rome. Crisconius and Peter (if, indeed, he was a bishop) are the only ones recorded to have done so. The applications usually came from inferior clergy who had suffered real or imaginary wrongs at the hands of their bishop. (2) In no case does Gregory deal personally with the complaints or pass sentence in Rome. On the contrary, he invariably refers the petitioners back to Africa. (3) Though the Pope did not hear the appeals himself, he did not simply dismiss them or disclaim jurisdiction. He always arranged that the cases should be considered either by individuals commissioned by himself, or else by a synod of bishops especially convoked for the purpose. (4) Gregory had the greatest difficulty in obtaining trustworthy information. One of the chief duties of Columbus was to keep the Pope posted on African affairs. But even with this informant, Gregory found it almost impossible to obtain accurate and detailed reports.

[1] *Epp.* viii. 2. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 52.

(c) *The Church of Milan.*

The great metropolitan see of Milan was independent of Rome. Here again, however, Gregory did his best to establish an informal kind of authority, and to interfere, though unostentatiously, with the acts and privileges of the archbishops. But the Church of Milan, like the Church in Africa, was not disposed to submit tamely to dictation from Rome, and Gregory found it necessary to proceed with the greatest circumspection.

Since the Lombard invasion in 569, the Archbishop of Milan, together with the greater part of his clergy, had been residing at Genoa, which was in the hands of the Imperialists. A certain number of clergy, however, remained in Milan itself, and these, on the death of the aged Archbishop Laurentius in 592, unanimously elected Constantius, a deacon of the Church, as his successor. The document of election was drawn up and forwarded to Rome, but, since the clergy residing in Milan were a minority, it was not subscribed. The Pope, who had the right of confirming the election and of seeing that the consecration of the new archbishop was performed according to precedent, refused to accept Constantius until he learned whether he would be acceptable also to the Milanese clergy at Genoa. Accordingly he ordered John, his rector in Liguria, to proceed to Genoa and ascertain the wishes of the clergy there; if they were in favour of Constantius, then the agent was to "cause him to be consecrated by his own suffragans, as ancient use demands,[1] with the assent of our authority and the help of the Lord, that by the preservation of the custom the Apostolic See may both retain its proper authority and also preserve intact the rights which it has conceded to others."[2] Meanwhile Gregory wrote to the clergy at Milan, expressing his approval of Constantius, whom he had met

[1] The rule was that the Archbishops of Milan and the Patriarchs of Aquileia should consecrate each other. Gregory says nothing about this. Laurentius, it seems, was consecrated by his own suffragans, and Gregory approves the practice, possibly on account of the difficulty of communication between Milan and Aquileia, by reason of the war, possibly because the Patriarchs were in schism, and out of communion with Rome.

[2] *Epp.* iii. 30.

at Constantinople, and for whom he had a regard. Nevertheless, he urged them completely to satisfy themselves respecting their nominee before they took the irrevocable step of consecrating him as their bishop. "For when he is once set over you he can no longer be judged by you. Therefore you should examine him all the more thoroughly now. But when your pastor has once been consecrated, give yourselves to him heart and soul, and in his person serve Almighty God who has set him over you." Gregory went on to remind them that if they wished for a good bishop they must show themselves worthy of one. "Divine judgment provides shepherds according to the deserts of the flock. Therefore do you seek the things of the Spirit, love what is heavenly, despise the temporal which passeth away, and be assured that you will have a shepherd well-pleasing to God, if you, on your part, please God by your actions. Lo, as the Scripture foretold, all the glory of the world has perished. Cities are overthrown, camps uprooted, churches destroyed; no tiller of the ground inhabits our land. Among ourselves, the poor remnant who are left, the sword of man rages incessantly, and the hand of God deals slaughter from above. The world-destruction, which we heard was coming, we now see before our eyes; the regions of the earth are become to us an open book. So in the passing of things we should reflect how all that we loved is nothing. Consider with trembling the day of the Eternal Judge which is coming, and by repentance anticipate its terrors. Wash away with your tears all the stains of your sins. By sorrow for a season allay the eternal wrath which is drawing nigh. For our loving Creator, when He comes for judgment, will comfort us with greater favour, as He sees us now punishing ourselves for our own transgressions."[1]

Constantius in the end was consecrated, but almost immediately afterwards he became involved in difficulties. In Liguria, of which Milan was the metropolis, there were many who still adhered to the schism of the Three Chapters: and certain bishops, the most prominent of whom was the Bishop of Brescia, refused to communicate with Constantius, alleging that he had signed a document pledging himself to uphold the Fifth General Council. Such a document had indeed been signed by the last archbishop, Laurentius, and had

[1] *Epp.* iii. 29.

been subscribed by certain nobles, among whom was Gregory himself, at that time Prefect of Rome. But no such security had been asked from or given by Constantius.[1] The rumour that was circulated, however, had one serious effect. For the Catholic Queen of the Lombards, Theudelinda, hearing of it, and being influenced by the disaffected bishops, withdrew from communion with the suspected Archbishop.[2] Gregory was greatly distressed at this news, and wrote at once to allay the royal scruples, professing his own entire adherence to the Council of Chalcedon, and affirming that the Fifth Council did nothing more than confirm the doctrine therein set forth. "Whatever was done in the time of Justinian was done that the faith of the Council of Chalcedon might in no way be disturbed."[3] He forwarded this letter to Constantius to deliver to the Queen. But the Archbishop, who knew that such outspoken commendation of the Fifth Council would only exasperate Theudelinda, suppressed the document and recommended the Pope to send another in more guarded terms.[4] Gregory, therefore, wrote again, omitting all reference to the Three Chapters, and merely stating his complete agreement with all that was done in the first four Councils. "As you have learnt the soundness of my faith by my express statement of it," he concludes,[5] "you ought to have no further uneasiness or doubt respecting the Church of St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles. Continue, then, in the true Faith and stablish your life on the rock of the Church, that is to say, on the confession of St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles, lest all your tears and all your good deeds be of no avail, if they be found severed from the true Faith. For as boughs wither which receive no nourishment from the root, so actions, however good they may appear, are nothing if they are separated from the foundation of faith. You ought therefore to send a messenger with all speed to my most reverend brother and fellow-bishop Constantius, and inform him by letter that you receive the news of his ordination with all pleasure, and that you in no wise separate yourself from his communion; that so he and I may sincerely rejoice together over you as a good and faithful daughter. By this you may know that you and your actions are pleasing to God, if before they are judged by

[1] *Epp.* iv. 2, 3. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 2. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 4.
[4] *Ibid.* iv. 37. [5] *Ibid.* iv. 33.

Him, they are approved by the judgment of His priests." In spite of this letter, however, it seems that Theudelinda clung to her opinions; for many years later we find her still refusing to endorse the condemnation of Theodore, Theodoret, and Ibas.[1] Meanwhile Constantius continued to be the subject of much calumny and malicious gossip, and in 596 the Pope wrote to beg him not to distress himself. "The man who is acquitted by his own conscience is free, however much men may accuse him."[2]

It seems, however, that, apart from the matter of the Three Chapters, there were some genuine grounds of complaint against Constantius. A great number of people, for instance, were offended because he persisted in mentioning the name of John of Ravenna in the mass. Gregory, hearing of this, directed the Archbishop to inquire if there was any precedent for this practice in his church. If not, he urged him to refrain from giving unnecessary offence, especially as John, for his part, was not accustomed to mention the name of Constantius at the altar.[3]

In 594 Constantius fell out with Gregory himself. The occasion was this. There was at Milan a certain soldier named Fortunatus, who, during the episcopate of the late bishop, had for many years eaten at the table of the Church, had sat among the nobles, and signed public documents. Constantius, however, commenced a suit against him with a view to depriving him of his rank. This appeared to Gregory a most unwarrantable measure, and he suggested that if it was really necessary that a trial should take place at all, it had better be held in Rome before himself.[4] Constantius replied with acrimony that he thought otherwise. To this the Pope rejoined[5]: "Your letter about Fortunatus has amazed us. Either it was not dictated by you, or, if yours, we by no means recognize in it our brother, the Lord Constantius. You ought to have seen, and you ought to see now, that I write on behalf of your own reputation. For when Fortunatus says

[1] *Epp.* xiv. 12; S. Columbani *Epp.* 5. (ed. *M. G. H.*).

[2] *Ibid.* vii. 14.

[3] *Ibid.* iv. 37. For the custom of reciting the names of living bishops and others in the mass, see Du Cange, *s.v.* "Diptycha;" Bingham, xv. 3, 18; *Dict. Chr. Ant.* vol. i. pp. 560–563. Consult also C. A. Salig *De diptychis veterum, tam profanis quam sacris.*

[4] *Ibid.* iv. 37.

[5] *Ibid.* v. 18.

that he is wronged by you, and is unable to find any one to help and defend him, he brings your good will into question. Therefore that your reputation may not be tarnished in the opinion of any one, and that your Church, if it has any just claims in this matter, may not suffer any loss, you ought to send an instructed person to represent you here, so that the merits of the case may be thoroughly weighed and a decision given without entailing odium upon yourself. For if, especially after his complaints, sentence in your favour is given in your city, it will be believed that he was worsted, not by force of argument, but solely by the force of your authority. Such is the love with which we are bound to you, that we shall not cease exhorting you to do what is desirable in the interest of your own reputation. For we know that though this exhortation grieves you for a time, it will hereafter give you pleasure, when the spirit of contention has passed away."

Gregory had a real affection for this hot-tempered prelate, in spite of his faults, and he was sincerely grieved when he heard of his death at Genoa in the year 600. It chanced that at this time there was peace between the Lombards and Imperialists, and King Agilulf, availing himself of the opportunity, made an effort to bring the metropolitan back from Genoa to Milan, and even put forward a candidate of his own for the vacant see. The electors, however, disregarding his wishes, proposed to the Pope the name of the deacon Deusdedit. Gregory approved their choice, and at the same time urgently warned them to make no concessions to the heretical Lombards.[1] "Do not be influenced by the letter which you say you have received from Agilulf. We will never on any account give our assent to a man who is chosen by those who are not Catholics, and especially by the Lombards; nor, if he is made bishop by some presumptuous usurpation, will we recognize him as holding that position and rank. For he is evidently unworthy to be the Vicar of St. Ambrose if he is elected and ordained by such persons. There is nothing in the matter to frighten you or to force you to act as Agilulf wishes, for the property from which the clergy who serve St. Ambrose are supported, is, by the grace of God, in Sicily and in the other provinces of the Empire; no part of it is in the enemy's territory."

[1] *Epp.* xi. 6.

Deusdedit was accordingly consecrated, the Roman notary Pantaleo being sent to see that everything was done according to precedent.[1] Before long the new archbishop was made sensible of the quiet control and supervision which the Pope thought himself justified in exercising over the metropolitans of Italy. "Our brother and fellow-bishop Theodore," Gregory wrote,[2] "complains that he is subjected to much unjust treatment, in spite of the promise made to him by your Holiness. We find it difficult to believe this, but as we cannot leave the matter uninvestigated, we have entrusted the consideration of it to our brother and fellow-bishop Venantius (of Luna), that he may make himself thoroughly acquainted with the merits of the case, and send us a report. We therefore beg you to send Bishop Theodore with the Defensor of your Church to our brother Venantius, that when he has learnt the truth of the matter himself, he may give us full information by letter." Gregory clearly intended that the final decision should rest with himself.

(*d*) *The Church of Ravenna.*

The history of Gregory's quarrel with the Bishops of Ravenna[3] is the subject of our next section, and it affords a very interesting illustration of the attitude which the great metropolitans of Northern Italy assumed with reference to the Papal claims. Ravenna was, of course, the capital of the Imperial possessions in Italy, and the residence of the Exarch. It was, therefore, perhaps, not unnatural that the bishops of the place should aspire to an ecclesiastical dignity somewhat corresponding with the secular importance of their city, and should resent any assumption of authority over them on the part of the Bishop of Rome. Just as the Patriarch of Constantinople, the capital of the Empire, struggled to make himself independent of the Patriarch of the West, so the Bishops of Ravenna, the seat of Italian administration, were impatient of control by the Pope, and, with the help and countenance of the Imperial officials, ventured to arrogate to themselves rights and privileges in defiance of the authority of the Apostolic See. It seemed to

[1] *Epp.* xi. 14. [2] *Ibid.* xiii. 33.

[3] The bishops of Ravenna are not called "archbishops" in Gregory's letters, nor in the Roman synod, a. 649. The title first appears in a document of the year 666 (M. G. H. *Script. Rer. Langobard*, p. 350).

them, doubtless, that the secular and the ecclesiastical rank of a place should harmonize, and that the bishop of a city of such high importance in the Empire ought not to occupy a merely subordinate position in the Church. And this view was naturally shared by the Exarch and his Court.

The dispute between Gregory and the Bishops of Ravenna was occasioned by an objection concerning the use of the pallium. This vestment, as is well known, consisted of a long band of white wool, ornamented with a varying number of black or purple crosses. It was draped over the shoulders (to which it was secured by three gold pins), with the two ends depending, one before and one behind.[1] Possibly it was of official origin[2]; but, as an episcopal vestment, it was in use, at any rate in the East, in the fifth century, being then regarded as the distinctive mark of episcopal authority in full exercise.[3] In the sixth century, in the East, it was worn indiscriminately by all bishops[4]; in the West it was worn of

[1] Gregory's own pallium is thus described by Joh. Diac. iv. 84: "Pallio mediocri, a dextro videlicet humero sub pectore super stomachum circulatim deducto; deinde sursum per sinistrum humerum post tergum deposito, cuius pars altera super eundem humerum veniens propria rectitudine, non per medium corporis, sed ex latere pendet." In this picture, it will be noticed, the front lappet hangs by the left side, and not in front, as is now usual. John further says that Gregory's pallium was "nullis acubus perforatum" and "bysso candente contextum" (c. 80). This last characteristic seems to indicate that it was not yet the custom to make the pallia of the wool of lambs reared in St. Agnes' Convent. But, of course, Gregory's pallium may have been exceptional. See Du Cange, "Pallium."

[2] Duchesne *Origines* p. 386, *sqq.* But see Wilpert *Un capitolo di storia del vestiario;* and W. Lowrie *Christian Art and Archaeology* p. 407, *sqq.*

[3] Isidor. Pelusiota *Epp.* i. 136 (c. 450), says that bishops wear a woollen omophorion (pallium), to typify the lost sheep borne by the Good Shepherd, and to show that they are imitators of Him; when the Gospel is read, they lay aside the vestment as in the presence of the Good Shepherd Himself. Cf. the story in Palladius *Vita Chrys.* c. 6, of Theophilus of Alexandria throwing his omophorion round Ammonius' neck. Liberatus *Brev.* 20 (c. 556) says: "Consuetudo est Alexandriae, illum qui defuncto succedit, excubias super defuncti corpus agere, manumque dexteram eius capiti suo imponere, et sepulto manibus suis, accipere collo suo beati Marci pallium et tunc legitime sedere." For a rule as to the wearing of the omophorion, see Labbe, viii. p. 1376. As far as the Roman Church is concerned, we have no document relating to its use earlier than the beginning of the sixth century.

[4] We do not know whether they needed to be invested with it by their Patriarch or no. But the story of Luitprand (*Relatio de Legatione Constant.* c. 62), that even the Patriarchs of Constantinople wore the pallium only by permission of the Pope, is too absurd to require serious refutation.

right by only three, namely, the Bishop of Rome, the Bishop of Ostia as the usual consecrator of the Pope,[1] and (it seems probable) the Bishop of Ravenna. Besides these three, other bishops were granted the privilege of wearing it by the special favour of the Pope.[2] Gregory, for instance, conferred it on the bishops of Syracuse, Messina, Palermo, Milan, Salona, Nicopolis, Corinth, Prima Justiniana, Arles, Autun, Seville, and Canterbury. In some of these cases (*e.g.* of Arles, Canterbury, and Syracuse) it carried with it special powers and a right of jurisdiction as Papal Vicar; in others it was merely a mark of honour and dignity. Some of the recipients, moreover, *e.g.* the bishops of Syracuse, Messina, Palermo, and Autun—were simple bishops and not metropolitans: nor was the pallium as yet considered a necessary badge of the metropolitan dignity. The vestment seems to have been originally an Imperial gift, and in the sixth century the Popes usually asked the Emperor's permission before bestowing it on bishops who were not subjects of the Empire.[3] As late as the seventh century the Emperor even claimed the right of conferring it directly, without the mediation of the Pope. The pallium was only granted to a bishop on personal application,[4] and was worn during the first part of the mass, up to the reading of the Gospel. The Pope, however, and in Gregory's time at least the Bishop of Ravenna,[5] kept it on throughout the service, and only laid it aside when they returned to the sacristry after the celebration.

Now, when Gregory became Pope, the Bishop of Ravenna was one John, a Roman by birth, and up to the time of the quarrel a trusted friend and ally of the Pope.[6] He is described as a man of medium height and dignified presence, stout but not fat, with curly grey hair. He was a zealous preacher, and

[1] *Lib. Pont. Vita S. Marci.*

[2] There are not many recorded instances of the bestowal of the pallium by Popes before the time of Gregory. Symmachus granted it to Theodore of Laureacus in Pannonia, and to Caesarius of Arles; Vigilius to Auxanius of Arles; Pelagius I to Sapandus of Arles.

[3] Vigilius would not grant the pallium to the Archbishop of Arles until he had obtained the Emperor's consent (*Epp.* 6, 7). Gregory asked it for the Bishop of Autun, but not for the Archbishops of Seville and Canterbury. Of these last, however, the former was well known in Constantinople, and the latter was a Roman monk.

[4] *Epp.* viii. 4. In the Roman synod of 595 Gregory forbade any payment to be made for the pallium. [5] *Ibid.* v. 61. [6] *Ibid.* iii. 54; v. 15.

given to good works. He completed the Church of St. Severus, at Ravenna, placing within it the body of the saint; and he built the Monastery of SS. Mark, Marcellus, and Felicula.[1] To him Gregory dedicated his *Pastoral Rule*[2]; to him he committed the charge of certain bishops of his own jurisdiction who were unable to come to Rome on account of the intervening Lombards.[3] His zeal in the Istrian controversy was warmly acknowledged.[4] Sometimes, indeed, John's discretion was at fault. Thus Gregory wrote on one occasion: "As to what you say about one who is already ordained being ordained again, it is exceedingly ridiculous, and ought not to be contemplated by a man of sense like you, unless by chance some precedent can be adduced which should be taken into account."[5] But on the whole, Gregory's relations with John were extremely friendly, until the bishop fell a victim to what the Pope regarded as "the sin of pride."

It was reported at Rome that the Bishop of Ravenna was accustomed to wear the pallium, not merely during mass, like the other metropolitans, but also when he gave audience to the laity before the service,[6] and when he went in solemn processions through the city. Further, it was said that he encouraged his clergy to use "mappulae," or white linen coverings placed over the saddles of their horses, when they went in processions—a privilege which had hitherto been reserved to the Roman clergy alone.

So soon as Gregory was informed of these practices, he ordered the notary Castorius, his agent at the Exarch's court, strictly to prohibit their continuance. Castorius obeyed, but the bishop despatched to Rome an indignant remonstrance. He denied that he was vested with the pallium when he gave audience to the laity; that he wore it in solemn litanies he admitted, but asserted that he did so in virtue of a privilege granted by a former Pope and exercised by his own predecessors.[7] In

[1] Agnellus *Lib. Pont. Eccl. Ravenn.* 98.

[2] Paul. Diac. *Vita* 14; Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 73.

[3] *Epp.* ii. 28. [4] *Ibid.* ii. 45. [5] *Ibid.* ii. 45.

[6] The laity (*filii ecclesiae*) were received in the "secretarium" of the church before mass. These secretaria were large apartments, capable of accommodating a considerable number of people. Councils were occasionally held in them. For the audiences in the secretarium, see *Epp.* iii. 54; v. 11, 61.

[7] *Ibid.* iii. 54. Honorius I (625–638) decreed that metropolitans who wore the pallium in the public streets or in processions should be deprived of it.

much the same manner he defended the use of the "mappulae," and he enclosed in his letter a copy of a "praeceptum," in which Pope John the Third had confirmed to Peter, John's predecessor in the see of Ravenna, all the privileges hitherto conceded to his Church.[1]

To this apology Gregory, in July 593, sent a carefully worded answer.[2] With regard to the wearing of the pallium during the reception of the laity in the sacristry, he did not press the point, though he said that he knew for a fact that John had worn it on such occasions, and forbade his doing so for the future. That the privilege of wearing it in solemn processions had ever been granted by any former Pope, there was no evidence to prove. No record of such a grant was extant in the archives of the Apostolic See; on the contrary, certain Romans who had visited Ravenna asserted positively that it had never been so used in their presence. Gregory, therefore, charged John either to conform to the general custom[3] and wear his pallium only during mass, or else to forward documentary evidence of the alleged privilege. In respect of the "mappulae," Gregory permitted them to be used, as a special favour, by the first deacons of Ravenna, when in attendance on the bishop. "The use of them at any other time or by any other persons we most strictly forbid."

John's reply to this was submissive enough.[4] "My fellow-servant Castorius, notary of your Apostolic See, has presented to me the letter of my Lord, in which honey and stings were mingled. The stings, however, were not beyond all hope of remedy. For when any one reproves pride, in obedience to the Divine commands, he indirectly professes to be mild and gentle himself. Now, you have stated that I, from a rebellious love of novelty, have in my use of the pallium exceeded the privileges granted to my predecessors. I trust that the conscience of my Lord, guided as it is by the hand of God, will not continue to believe this. I trust that my Lord will not open his most sacred ears to uncertain rumours. In the first place, I, though a sinner, know how grievous a thing it is

[1] *Epp.* iii. 67. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 54.

[3] "Illud tibi non putamus ignotum, quod prope de nullo metropolita in quibuslibet mundi partibus sit auditum, extra missarum tempus usum sibi pallii vindicasse."

[4] *Ibid.* iii. 66.

to transgress the limits fixed by the Fathers; I know that the end of all pride is a fall. If our ancestors did not tolerate pride in kings, with much more reason is pride intolerable in bishops. And, in the second place, I do not forget that I was brought up in the heart and bosom of your holy Roman Church, and there by God's grace obtained my first promotion. And how should I possibly dare to oppose that most holy See, which transmits its laws to the universal Church,—to preserve the authority of which I have, God knows, incurred the bitter hostility of many?" After further defending himself from the charge of introducing novelties, John concluded thus: "As the Providence of God has placed all things in your hand and in your most pure conscience, I adjure you by that Apostolic See which you once ruled by force of character, and which you now rule with the honour which is your due, do not, for my sins, in any way lessen the privileges enjoyed till now by the Church of Ravenna, which Church is peculiarly yours.[1] Now that you have learnt the real state of the case, it depends on God and on yourself to determine what shall be done. For in my anxiety to obey the commands of my Apostolic Lord, I am determined to abstain from these ancient usages, until I hear from you again."

These meek expressions might have had more effect on Gregory if he had not received trustworthy information that Bishop John in private was in the habit of indulging in all manner of scurrilous witticisms and sarcasms at his expense, reviling him worse than "a lawyer's clerk." Nor does it appear that this double-faced prelate ever attempted to discontinue his illegal practices. On the contrary, he exerted himself to the utmost to stir up the Government authorities, and bring official pressure to bear upon the Pope. And, in consequence of his solicitations, Romanus the Exarch, George the Pretorian Prefect of Italy, Andrew a judicial assessor, and other eminent and influential persons, sent urgent letters to Rome, imploring Gregory to respect the rights and privileges of the Church of Ravenna.

The duplicity and contumacy of the bishop greatly incensed the Pope. "I thank Almighty God," he wrote, "that when

[1] Possibly in allusion to the story that St. Appollinaris, the patron saint of Ravenna, was a disciple of St. Peter (Agnellus *Lib. Pont. Eccl. Ravenn.* c. 1).

I heard of it the Lombards were posted between me and Ravenna. Else perhaps I should have been minded to show the world how severe I can be." He said he had made further inquiry concerning the use of the pallium in litanies by former Bishops of Ravenna. One witness had averred that it was only worn when relics were deposited; another, named Adeodatus, sometime deacon of Ravenna, asserted that it was worn only on the festivals of St. John the Baptist, St. Peter, and St. Apollinaris; several Roman responsales, however, affirmed that it was never worn in litanies by any former bishops nor even by John himself until after Gregory's accession. The balance of evidence thus seemed to show that the alleged custom was nothing more than a "surreptitious usurpation" of very recent origin. Gregory, however, felt that it would be unwise to ignore altogether the wishes of the Exarch and the other official persons who had written to him. He accordingly ordered careful inquiry to be made at Constantinople regarding the use of the pallium in litanies, and promised that if the practice was found to obtain anywhere, he would not deny it to the Church of Ravenna. Meanwhile, until accurate information came to hand, he permitted John to go vested with the pallium on the festivals of St. John the Baptist, St. Peter, and St. Apollinaris, and on the anniversary of his consecration; at other times he was to wear it only at mass.[1]

On the 11th of January 595, John died, after an episcopate of more than sixteen years. Since the consecration of the Bishops of Ravenna was at this time performed in Rome, Gregory directed that one or more of those nominated for the bishopric should be sent to him without delay, accompanied by five of the senior priests, the same number of influential laymen, and some others of the clergy.[2] Accordingly, in due time two candidates arrived. One was Donatus archdeacon of Ravenna, who had secured the interest of the Exarch, and was supported by the suffrages of the official party; the other was a priest named John. The event of the election is told in the following letter from Gregory to Andrew[3]: "We were anxious to comply with the wishes of his Excellency the Patrician in favour of Donatus the archdeacon. But since it is very perilous to the soul to ordain any one without careful consideration, we made it

[1] *Epp.* v. 11, 15. [2] *Ibid.* v. 24. [3] *Ibid.* v. 51.

our business to investigate thoroughly his life and character. And whereas we discovered much which disqualified him from being made bishop—of which we have notified our Lord the Patrician by letter—we felt that we could not possibly consent to his consecration, as we fear the judgment of God. Nor did we venture to ordain the priest John, because he did not know the Psalms—a circumstance which proved that he was deficient in zeal for his own improvement. These candidates then being rejected, and the persons present being urged by us to choose one of their own people, and confessing that they could produce no one fit for the office, both they and we alike were greatly grieved. At last with one consent and with united voice they over and over again petitioned for my venerable brother, the priest Marinianus, who, as they knew, had been a long time with me in my monastery. He tried in various ways to get off, and was with difficulty persuaded at last to accept their petition. As we know his character well, and have found him zealous for winning souls, we ordained him without delay. I pray your Glory, therefore, to receive him kindly, comforting him and helping him in his inexperience, for, as you well know, inexperience makes the work of any office very troublesome."

Curiously enough, Marinianus, the Roman, was a nephew of his predecessor. He was a man of considerable personal beauty, with a long, ruddy face, and flashing grey eyes.[1] His character was spotless, and his affection for Gregory sincere. Doubtless the Pope congratulated himself on the result of the election, expecting that now the pallium controversy would be quietly dropped, and that his own influence at Ravenna would be increased by means of his old fellow-monk and pupil. If such was his expectation, however, Gregory met with a disappointment. Once consecrated bishop, Marinianus found it impossible to retreat from the position taken up by his predecessor. Feeling at Ravenna was very strong, and the clergy and officials united in pressing the bishop to resist the intrusions of Rome. Hence, whether of his own free will or by compulsion, Marinianus went over to the party of resistance, and Gregory had the mortification of seeing his old friend taking sides with the Exarch and the disobedient clerical faction against himself.

[1] Agnellus *Lib. Pont. Eccl. Ravenn.* 99.

Soon after the consecration of Marinianus, the Pope had sent him the pallium, directing him to wear it only during the celebration of mass and during the solemn litanies on the four great festivals, according to the instructions furnished to John.[1] But this concession by no means satisfied the patriotic party at Ravenna. Once more official pressure was brought to bear upon the Pope. In particular, "the magnificent Lord Andrew" was ceaseless in his importunity, boldly asserting that it was the custom at Ravenna to wear the pallium daily in a solemn litany, except during the season of Lent. Gregory was naturally astonished at this statement, which conflicted not only with those of his own delegates, but also with that of Adeodatus. Nevertheless, he could not avoid reopening the question. He promised to allow the Church of Ravenna to retain such customs as could be proved to have existed before the time of Bishop John. And to discover what exactly these were, he ordered that the senior clergy and laity should assemble before the body of St. Apollinaris, and, touching his sepulchre, should take oath in the following form: "I swear by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the undivided Trinity of Divine Power, and by this body of the blessed martyr Apollinaris, that without favour to any one and without advantage to myself, I give my testimony. But this I know by personal experience, that before the time of John, the late bishop, in the presence of such and such representatives of the Apostolic See, on such and such days, the Bishop of Ravenna was accustomed to wear the pallium, and I am not aware that he had secretly or in the absence of the Roman representative usurped this privilege."[2]

It seems, however, that this investigation was never held.[3] At any rate, it led to no definite result. For three years later (in 599) we find Gregory complaining of the difficulty of extracting the truth from those who were sent by Marinianus to treat with him on the matter, and ordering another inquiry to be instituted.[4] How the affair finally ended we do not know. There is no evidence to show that Marinianus and his supporters submitted to the Pope's regulations, nor is it likely that these regulations were ever formally cancelled. The probability is that the question was allowed to drop.

[1] *Epp.* v. 61.
[2] *Ibid.* vi. 31.
[3] Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 7.
[4] *Epp.* ix. 167.

The pallium controversy illustrates the jealous temper of the Ravennate clergy, and their rooted belief that the Pope desired to encroach. This hostility to Rome was clearly expressed in 596, when an abbat named Claudius appealed against the sentence of the bishop, and Gregory proceeded to try his case. Both clergy and laity were loud in their complaints that such an act of interference was contrary to the canons of the Church and to Imperial law. "Do not mind what foolish people say," wrote Gregory to Marinianus,[1] "and do not think that we are doing any injustice to your Church." The cause, he went on to explain, could not be tried at Ravenna, because the complaint of the abbat was that he had been unjustly treated by the late bishop. He had, therefore, a perfect right to appeal to a higher authority. And if, according to the canons, appeals could be made from Constantinople, the Imperial city, to the Apostolic See, much more could they be made from Ravenna. Marinianus recognized that in this instance Gregory was in the right. He therefore sent proctors to represent him at the trial in Rome, and acquiesced without protest in the result, which was favourable to the monastery.

The conduct and administration of the bishop himself Gregory watched very closely, and he sent him at times some severe reproofs. Complaints came to Rome, for instance, that the clergy of Ravenna oppressed the monasteries, and that monks who had been ordained for parochial work continued to reside among the brethren. Gregory charged Marinianus to correct these abuses,[2] and when his first admonition was productive of no effect, he wrote again yet more sharply[3]: "Do not defer the correction of this evil now that you have been warned a second time. For if we find you still negligent—which we do not think will be the case—we shall be compelled to provide for the peace of the monasteries in another way. Be it known to you that we will not allow the congregation of God's servants to be subject any longer to such oppression."

With all his affection for his old friend, Gregory seems to have felt, especially at first, that Marinianus was too much a recluse and too little a man of business to administer satisfactorily so important a see. The discontent he felt is vented in a letter to the Abbat Secundus, about a year after Marinianus's

[1] *Epp.* vi. 24. [2] *Ibid.* vi. 28. [3] *Ibid.* vii. 40.

appointment.[1] "Talk to my brother and fellow-bishop Marinianus, and do your best to stir him up, for I suspect that he has gone to sleep. Among a party of men who came to me the other day were some mendicants. I asked them what had been given them and by whom, and they told me what each person had given them during their journey. And when I anxiously inquired what Marinianus had given them, they answered that they had asked of him but had received nothing, not even bread for their journey, although it always used to be the custom of the Church of Ravenna to give to everybody. Their words were, 'He answered us saying, "I have nothing to give you."' I am indeed surprised that a man who has garments, who has silver, who has food, has nothing to give to the poor. Tell him that, as he has changed his position, so he ought to change his ideas. He must not think that study and prayer are enough for him, and that he may sit by himself and make no profit by the work of his hands. He must have an open hand, he must help those who are in want, he must regard the distresses of others as though they were his own,—otherwise he bears the name of a bishop in vain. I have given him some advice in a letter for his soul's good, but he has answered me not a word, so I suppose he has not condescended even to read it. I have therefore not felt bound to give him any counsel in a letter that I have just sent him; I have only written to him as an adviser in matters of worldly business. I am not obliged to weary myself with dictating a letter to a man who will not read it. I therefore beg your Affection to talk over the whole matter with him privately, and to admonish him how he ought to act, lest—which God forbid!—he lose by his negligence the life he once possessed."

Marinianus's slackness, however, seems to have been incurable, and some time afterwards we find Gregory writing to him that he had wished to entrust some affairs to his management, but, seeing how neglectful he had been in one matter, he would not trouble him about the others.[2] Yet if the Bishop of Ravenna was sometimes disposed to think that the reproofs he received were too severe, the following letter, written on a bed of sickness, must have proved to him that the Pope's affection was in no way lessened[3]:—

[1] *Epp.* vi. 63. [2] *Ibid.* ix. 188. [3] *Ibid.* xi. 21; cf. xiii. 30.

"On the arrival of a person from Ravenna I was greatly shocked and grieved to hear that your Fraternity was suffering from spitting of blood. I have caused careful inquiry to be made of every one of the doctors here who are known to be well informed upon the subject, and I have sent you a written statement of what they severally thought and of what they prescribed.[1] Above all things, they recommend quiet and silence, and I am very doubtful whether you can obtain this while you remain in your diocese. I therefore think you ought to make arrangements for the management of your Church, appoint persons to celebrate mass, to show hospitality, to receive strangers and look after the monasteries, and then come to me before the summer, that I may myself, to the utmost of my power, take special care of your health and see that you are kept quiet. The doctors say that the summer-time is very dangerous for persons suffering from your complaint. Hence I am very much afraid that if, in addition to the unfavourableness of the season, you should be troubled with anxieties about your diocese, the disease will become yet more dangerous than it is at present. I am very weak myself, and I feel it very desirable that you should, by God's grace, return in good health to your Church, or that, if you are to be called away from earth, you should receive the call in the arms of your own friends, or that, if Almighty God should see fit to call me before you—and I am not far from death—I should pass away in your arms. If, however, the troubled state of the country is an obstacle to your journey, Agilulf may be induced, for a small present, to send one of his own men to escort you as far as Rome. If you feel that the disease continues and you make up your mind to come here, you need bring but few persons with you, because you will live with me in my palace, and will be waited on daily by the attendants belonging to the Church. Furthermore, I do not exhort or advise, but I strictly charge you not to venture to fast, because the doctors say that fasting is very

[1] Gregory, although a firm believer in miracles of healing, yet did not despise the physician's natural remedies. Contrast Gregory of Tours, who tells a curious story of an archdeacon blind for ever, because, when he was regaining his sight by prayers to St. Martin, he allowed a Jewish doctor to put leeches on his shoulders. The historian thus points the moral: "Ideo doceat unumquemque Christianum haec causa, ut quando caelestem accipere meruerit medecinam, terrena non requirat studia" (Greg. Tur. *H. F.* v. 6).

injurious in such cases. If, however, some important celebration requires you to do so, I allow you to fast five times in the year. You must also give up observing the vigils; and you must get some one else to recite the prayers, which, according to the custom at Ravenna, are said over the Paschal candle,[1] and to deliver the expositions of the Gospel which are given by the bishops about the time of Easter. On no account undertake any work which is beyond your strength. I say this that, in case you feel better and so defer coming here, you may know what care you ought to take of yourself, in obedience to my orders."

The Bishop of Ravenna did not accept Gregory's invitation. His health seems to have improved, and he outlived Gregory two years, dying on the 23rd of October 606.

(*e*) *The Church in Istria.*

In Istria the schism of the Three Chapters continued throughout Gregory's pontificate. It has already been related how Gregory exerted himself in the time of Pelagius to confute the schismatics, and what small success attended his efforts. When he became Pope he determined to try more drastic measures. He despatched a body of soldiers, under the command of a tribune and an Imperial guardsman, who carried the following summons to Severus, the Patriarch of Aquileia[2]: "The Lord is eager to embrace the man who goes astray and returns to the right path, yet when such a one again deserts the way of truth, His sorrow over the wanderer is greater than His joy over his first conversion. For it is less sinful to be ignorant of the truth than not to abide in it when known. It is one thing to act in error; it is another to sin with knowledge. And we who lately rejoiced at your return to the unity of the Church, are now the more abundantly distressed at your apostasy.[3] Accordingly, we desire you, at the instance of the bearer of these presents, according to the command of our Most Christian and Serene Emperor, to present yourself with your adherents at the threshold of St. Peter, that a synod may be assembled, and a decision reached concerning the matters which are in dispute among you."

[1] On the Paschal taper, see *Dict. Chr. Ant.* ii. p. 1564; Duchesne *Origines* p. 241, *sqq.*

[2] *Epp.* i. 16.

[3] See above, p. 210.

The allusion in the above letter to the Emperor was nothing more than a piece of bluff. Maurice cared nothing about the matter. The Exarch Smaragdus, who had been hot against the schismatics, and had even kidnapped the Patriarch, had been withdrawn, and his successor, Romanus, was strongly opposed to the violent measures which found favour with Gregory and such ardent Catholics as John of Ravenna. Hence the Pope could count on the support neither of the Emperor nor of the Exarch, as indeed speedily became apparent.

The stern summons of the Pope caused much alarm to Severus and his suffragans. Two synods were immediately held—one of the schismatic bishops dwelling in Lombard territory, and the other of those in the Imperial cities on the coast. Each of these assemblies drew up a letter of remonstrance to the Emperor, and Severus, in his individual capacity, added a third. Of these three documents the first alone, subscribed by ten bishops of Venetia and Rhaetia Secunda, has come down to us.[1] It begins with an emphatic assertion of the Catholicity of the bishops subscribing, and also of their loyalty to the Roman Republic, though oppressed by the "grievous yoke of the Gentiles." The petitioners pleaded that in refusing to condemn the three so-called heretics, they were only upholding the Council of Chalcedon, and obeying the express orders which Pope Vigilius had caused to be circulated through all the provinces. These orders their predecessors had accepted and obeyed, and they themselves did but follow in their footsteps when they refused to accept the Fifth Council or to communicate with those who did so. The Patriarch Elias, however, on this account had been persecuted by Smaragdus, and so had Severus. And now Pope Gregory had summoned the latter to appear in Rome before himself—a judge who was a party in the case and with whom they held no communion. But the Emperor had rescued Elias; let him now do as much for Severus. Let him grant a truce for the present. Later, when the Lombards were crushed and peace was restored, they would be glad to present themselves at Constantinople and to plead their cause before him; for the Emperors had always shown themselves just arbiters and restorers of peace in the Church. Unless the persecution were stopped and the rights

[1] *Epp.* i. 16*a*.

of Aquileia were preserved, their own successors in the Venetian and Rhaetian sees would undoubtedly transfer their allegiance from the loyal Patriarch to the neighbouring Archbishops of Gaul. And it was likely that when ecclesiastical allegiance was transferred, political obedience also would shortly follow.

This representation produced the desired effect. Maurice, if indifferent to the religious aspect of the question, was by no means indifferent to the political consequences involved. He therefore sent off to Gregory a rescript in Latin, ordering him to let the schismatics alone. The document was addressed in grandiloquent style: "In the name of the Lord our God Jesus Christ, the Emperor Caesar Flavius Mauritius Tiberius, Faithful in Christ, the Pacific, Mild, Greatest, Beneficent, Victor of the Alamanni, to the Most Holy Gregory, the Very Blessed Archbishop of the fostering city of Rome, and Patriarch." The Emperor referred to the receipt of the Istrian despatches, and commanded Gregory, on account of the disturbed condition of Italy, to cause no further trouble to the schismatic bishops for the present. When civil peace was established, ecclesiastical union might be restored. Maurice added a postscript in his own handwriting: "God keep you many years, most holy and blessed Father." [1]

Gregory had some reason to feel aggrieved at this command. His efforts to uphold the doctrine which the Emperor Justinian had thrust upon the Church were actually being hindered by one of Justinian's own successors. Surely Constantinople was the last place where those who contumaciously refused to accept the Fifth Council ought to have been defended. Moreover, even if the rescript had not, as was alleged, been obtained by liberal bribes to persons of influence at court, yet it was evident that the motives which led to its issue were not ecclesiastical, but purely secular. It was a glaring case of the subordination of religious interests to political expediency. Nevertheless, Gregory dared not disobey so express a mandate. He was obliged to give up for a time all thought of persecution, although he did not cease to importune the Emperor on the matter "with the greatest zeal and freedom." On Severus himself he shortly had an opportunity of taking a rather petty revenge. In 592 the city of Aquileia was devastated by a

[1] *Epp.* i. 16*b*.

terrible fire, and a relief fund was started in aid of the sufferers. Even such aggressive Catholics as John of Ravenna were moved to sympathy, and sent contributions; but Gregory refused to give anything. Alms should be given to the faithful, he said, and not to the enemies of the Church, particularly when the latter had been spending money in Constantinople to thwart the purposes of the Apostolic See.[1]

In a later letter, addressed to "all the bishops of Iberia," Gregory insisted that the schismatics had no right to regard themselves as martyrs, or to talk about "persecution."[2] "Persecution, unless endured in a good cause, is unprofitable for salvation. There is no reward for sin, and it is impious to expect it. Recollect Cyprian's [or rather it should be Augustine's] words: 'Martyrem non facit poena sed causa.'" Nor could the schismatics with any show of reason point to the troubles in Italy, as though they were God's punishment for the Church's acceptance of the Fifth Council. They should remember the text, *Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.* God has shown greater love and approval of Italy, since He has counted her worthy to endure His scourge. Talk of punishment! Why, Rome was captured after Vigilius's condemnation of the Acephali. Was, then, the cause of the Monophysites favoured by Heaven? To remove all remaining doubts, Gregory forwarded to his correspondents "the very useful letter" which he had composed in the time of Pope Pelagius, recommending them to study it carefully with unbiassed minds. If after that they continued to maintain their damnable opinions, it would be a proof that they surrendered themselves "not to reason, but to obstinacy."

Meanwhile among the schismatics themselves a reaction appears to have set in, and many individuals or small parties of disaffected persons became reconciled to the Church. Thus in the very first year of his pontificate, Gregory received in Rome a certain Neapolitan named Stephen, who for certain doubts (probably on the question of the Three Chapters) had withdrawn from the communion of the Catholic Church. This man, being convinced of his error, stated that he had several friends in Naples who would be willing to return to orthodoxy, provided that the Pope would take upon his own soul the

[1] *Epp.* ii. 45. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 49.

peril, so that no punishment should fall on them hereafter. Gregory gladly assented, and wrote to the Bishop of Naples to readmit them all, declaring that he himself was willing to bear all the responsibility.[1] Again, in July 595 two Istrian bishops—Peter of Altino, and Providentius of some see unknown—expressed a wish to confer with Gregory about reunion, provided that they could do so without fear of molestation.[2] And in 599, once more, a large body of schismatics came to Rome and were received into the Church[3]; among them being a deputation from the "insula Capritana." The details of the transactions which took place in connexion with the last-named place are involved in some obscurity, but the general course of events seems to have been as follows.[4] The "insula Capreae Histricae provinciae"—probably to be identified with a village named Isola, situated in the neighbourhood of Cittanuova—had been annexed to the episcopal see of Cittanuova, where a Pannonian named John was bishop. After a while, however, John was expelled by violence from the province, and another bishop was consecrated in his place, who, moreover took up his residence, not at Cittanuova, but at Isola. At first the newcomer had some thoughts of returning to the Roman communion, and with that end in view commenced negotiations with the Exarch. But afterwards he changed his mind and reverted to the schism. The Capritans, however, were eager for reunion, and refused to receive their bishop, who thereupon retired to Sicily. Then the Capritans sent a deputation to Rome to announce their return to allegiance, and to request that a new bishop might be ordained. Gregory, however, with his habitual caution, refused to sanction another ordination until an appeal had been made to the exiled prelate in Sicily, who was reported to be once more wavering in his views. The envoys were accordingly sent on to Sicily to interview their former bishop. If the latter was really inclined for reunion, Gregory directed that he should come to Rome, the expenses of his journey being paid; or if he neither wished this nor desired to return to his see, but yet was willing to give a written security that he would remain in communion with the Roman Church, a suitable provision was to be made to enable him to live

[1] *Epp.* i. 14.
[2] *Ibid.* v. 56.
[3] *Ibid.* ix. 141, 148.
[4] *Ibid.* ix. 150, 152, 154, 155.

quietly where he was. In the latter case, however, or in case of his continuing in schism, the Archbishop of Ravenna was to ordain some one to administer the see of Isola, who was moreover to be subject to his metropolitan jurisdiction, "until the Istrian bishops return to the orthodox faith."

Gregory's activity in this affair seems to have somewhat alarmed the Exarch Callinicus, who wrote to remind him of the Emperor's express injunctions respecting Severus and his associates. Gregory replied that "the order, though itself elicited by false representations, by no means enjoins you to repulse those who are returning to Church unity, but only forbids you at this unsettled time to compel those who are unwilling to return," and he suggested that the whole affair should be reported to Maurice. At the end of the letter he expressed his surprise that Callinicus should have awarded only a slight punishment to his major-domo for his negligence (or, as Gregory suspected, his venality) in allowing the petition of a bishop, who desired to return to the Catholic Church, to fall into the hands of the schismatics. "And yet," he adds, "I soon blamed myself for being surprised, for where the Lord Justinus gives advice, these heretics cannot be arraigned." Clearly the Exarch had on his council men who favoured the schism, and were not unwilling to thwart the intentions of the powerful Bishop of Rome.[1]

In May 602 Firminus bishop of Trieste was received back into the Catholic communion,[2] and signed the following document, which was delivered to Gregory's representative at Ravenna[3]: "Whenever the eye of the soul which has been darkened by the clouds of error is illuminated by the light from heaven, we must earnestly strive lest the author of schism should again secretly enter into the soul, and with the sword of falsehood shall sever it once more from the root of unity to which it has attached itself. I, therefore, now that I have learnt the nature of that snare which held me in the bonds of schism, of my own accord and of my own free will, after long and careful consideration, have returned, under the guidance of Divine grace, to the unity of the Apostolic See. And lest I should be supposed to be acting disingenuously and insincerely in this matter, I bind myself by an anathema, and under penalty of losing my rank as a bishop, I vow and

[1] *Epp.* ix. 154. [2] *Ibid.* xii. 13. [3] *Ibid.* xii. 7.

promise to you, and through you to St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles, and to his Vicar, the most blessed Gregory and his successors, that I will never be persuaded by any one or be induced in any way to return to that schism from which I have been set free by the mercy of our Redeemer, but I will ever remain under all circumstances in the unity of the holy Catholic Church, and in communion with the Roman Pontiff. Therefore I swear by Almighty God and by these four holy Gospels which I hold in my hands, and by the life and genius of our Sovereigns who rule the commonwealth, that I will always faithfully abide in the unity of the Catholic Church, to which by the goodness of God I have returned, and in the communion of the Roman Pontiff. But if—which God forbid! —I shall under any pretext or induced by any argument, sever myself from this unity, may I be sentenced to eternal punishment for the sin of perjury, and have my portion in the world to come with the author of schism. This record of my confession and promise I have dictated to my notary and have signed it with my own hand, acting with the consent of the priests, deacons, and clergy, who have urged me to this act of reunion, and who now, following my example of their own free will, are about themselves to sign the document."

In consequence of his secession, Firminus had to endure much persecution at the hands of his former associates, and Gregory wrote to request the Exarch to protect him.[1] The fact that many of the reconciled bishops went to live at Constantinople or else in Sicily seems to prove that Severus and the schismatic leaders had no more enlightened ideas of tolerance than the Pope himself, and that they were not above using violent measures to keep their party together and hinder those who might otherwise have been willing to return to the communion of the Roman Church.[2]

Gregory, on his side, continued to strain every nerve to break the strength of the schism. Those who had once begun to hesitate found their return facilitated in every way. The Pope invited them, especially the bishops, to come to Rome to

[1] *Epp.* xiii. 36.

[2] In 596 a deputation of reconciled Istrians went to Constantinople to complain "de pravitate episcoporum qui in illis partibus sunt" (*Epp.* ix. 201). This seems to imply that those who renounced the schism were subject to persecution by their former friends.

discuss with him the points in dispute. He promised them a kindly welcome, and the means of returning to their own homes, even if he failed to convince them. Those who abandoned the schism he helped—if help were needed—to the utmost of his power, and protected them from the enmity of their former associates. They were not required explicitly to give their adherence to the Fifth General Council, but only to sign a document renouncing the schism, similar to that which was given by Firminus. When mere persuasion failed to convince, Gregory sometimes tried the effect of a bribe. Thus, when he heard that the clergy of Como had told the Archbishop of Milan that in a dispute about some property they had not been so well treated by the Roman Church as to be anxious to return to her communion, he wrote: "If the land which they say is unjustly retained by us be really theirs, it shall be restored to them at once, even if they continue in their schism. But if, as we hope, they will return to the Church, we are ready to give up the land to them, whether they have a right to it or not." [1]

The last argument of coercion by violence Gregory never dared to employ during Maurice's lifetime; but when the Emperor was dead, and Smaragdus, whose zeal had been so conspicuously displayed during his former tenure of office, was once more Exarch, Gregory urged that sterner measures might be adopted.[2] "We hope that the fervour of zeal which you formerly showed in this matter will be kindled to greater heat than ever, and that you will be the more ready to punish and restrain the enemies of God, as the defence of the soul, in the sight of God, is more precious than that of the body. Let the uprightness of faith which is strong within you arm you against those who go astray. Let the body of the Church now rent asunder in your dominions, be restored during your rule to its former wholeness. You will be repaid for your exertions in this matter by Him who is the Author of uprightness and unity. For we trust in God's mercy that our outward enemies will find you the stronger against them, in proportion as the enemies of the true faith find you terrible against themselves through your love to God."

Before the close of his pontificate, Gregory had the satisfaction of knowing that the schism was greatly weakened.

[1] *Epp.* ix. 186. [2] *Ibid.* xiii. 36.

Every year the reasons which originally seemed to justify it were losing their force, every year the schismatics became more isolated. No fresh converts joined them, and the old leaders were either dying off or returning into Catholic communion. Certainly in the cities of Istria and Northern Italy which were subject to the Lombards, the party of resistance was still vigorous. The Lombard Queen Theudelinda, though on the best of terms with Gregory, could not be persuaded to renounce the schismatic communion; and in this point her trusted friend and councillor, the abbat Secundus, shared and perhaps formed her views.[1] Yet the end was now only a matter of time. About a hundred years later, at the Synod of Pavia,[2] summoned by King Cuninepert in 698, the last of the schismatics renounced their heresy, and were restored to the unity of the Catholic Church. The harvest was gathered by Pope Sergius the First, but we cannot doubt that the seeds of it were sown by Pope Gregory the Great.

(*f*) *The Church in Dalmatia.*

The Church of Dalmatia was the occasion of considerable annoyance and anxiety to Gregory throughout the greater part of his pontificate. The difficulty of communicating with Rome had naturally loosened the ties which bound the clergy of this region to the Pope, and had diminished the authority of the Western Patriarch, always somewhat weak in these parts. The events which have now to be related are important as showing to what lengths resistance to the Pope might be carried with impunity, and to what extent even so vigorous a Papal autocrat as Gregory was compelled to make concessions. These events have also a political significance, inasmuch as they brought Gregory into more or less of conflict with the Imperial authorities, and even with the Emperer himself. For this

[1] *Epp.* xiv. 12. Gregory sent to Secundus a copy of the acts of the Fifth General Council, "ut praedictus filius meus ipsam relegens agnoscat, quia falsa sunt omnia quae contra apostolicam sedem vel catholicam ecclesiam audierat." Columban (*Ep.* 5) told Boniface IV that the condemnation of the Three Chapters by Rome was the principal reason which deterred King Agilulf from becoming a Catholic.

[2] See *Carmen de Synodo Ticinensi*, printed as Appendix II. to Paul's *Hist. Lang.* (*Mon. Germ. Hist.*).

reason I have here devoted a separate section to the Church of Dalmatia, instead of referring to its affairs in the course of a general review of the Churches of Illyricum. Gregory's relations with these other Churches will be considered apart, in the final section of this chapter.

The metropolis of Dalmatia at this time was Salona, a city which once occupied a site near the modern Spalatro. The metropolitan bishop of Salona was one Natalis, a merry, free-handed *bon-vivant*, whose good dinners were notorious. At these convivial gatherings, it was rumoured, the guests were not wearied with recitations from the Scriptures, customary at episcopal repasts, but secular scandal was discussed, and racy stories told of absentees. The archbishop himself preferred a jest to a sermon. He found reading irksome, and gave it up. His episcopal duties he light-heartedly neglected. He even wished to distribute the property of his Church among his own relations. Yet he was shrewd enough to conciliate the favour of the influential persons in his diocese, and his easy good nature and lavish hospitality made him extremely popular.

It was the misfortune of this gay prelate to be associated with an archdeacon of a character diametrically opposite to his own. Honoratus was a rigid moralist, a stern, unbending, and thoroughly disagreeable kind of man, who looked with extreme disapproval on the frivolities of his superior, continually made protests, and, when these produced no effect, sent long com plaints about him to the Pope in Rome. Natalis very naturally resented this surveillance, and for a time there was considerable unpleasantness at Salona. At length the archbishop devised a scheme for removing his mentor. At the close of the year 590 he summoned a synod, got Honoratus condemned and deposed from his archdeaconry, and, to disqualify him for ever from regaining his office, forcibly ordained him to the priesthood.[1]

This cunning device of degrading a man from a position of

[1] *Epp.* i. 19. So Anatolius of Constantinople made Aetius a presbyter in order to remove him from his archdeaconry. "Deiectionem innocentis per speciem provectionis implevit" (Leo M. *Epp.* 111). Hieron. *Comm. in Ezech.* c. 48 says that an archdeacon "quia per singula concionatur in populos et a pontificis latere non recedit, iniuriam putat si presbyter ordinetur." We get no certain instances of presbyters as archdeacons till the ninth century, when Hincmar of Rheims addresses his archdeacons as "archidiaconibus-presbyteris" (Mansi *Conc.* xv. 497).

power by raising him to a higher rank in the ministry, filled Gregory with indignation. He wrote at once to Natalis, peremptorily insisting that Honoratus should be at once restored. If after this their differences remained unsettled, Natalis was at liberty to send a proctor to Rome to meet Honoratus, and the Pope promised that he would, in the presence of both, "decide what justice approves, without respect of persons." But this communication was ignored by the archbishop. Accordingly, in March 592, Gregory addressed to him a sterner letter, pointing out that the disregard he was showing for the laws of the Church and the commands of the Pope lent a colour to the charges brought against him by the party of Honoratus. If, therefore, after this second admonition, he neglected to restore the archdeacon and to send a representative to Rome, he would be deprived of the use of the pallium; if he still persisted in his disobedience, he would be excommunicated; and if, after that, he yet continued obdurate, he would be deposed.[1] This epistle, which was accompanied by an address of similar purport to the suffragan bishops of Dalmatia,[2] and by an appeal to Jobinus the Pretorian Prefect of Illyricum,[3] urging him not to interfere with the course of justice, produced the desired effect. Honoratus was restored to his office of archdeacon, and the archbishop wrote a reply to the accusations brought against himself.

This letter has not been preserved, but its general contents, which we gather from the Pope's answer, well illustrate the mind and character of this eccentric man. As an apology it was, to say the least, extraordinary. In defence of his banquets the archbishop reminded the Pope that Abraham had feasted the angels, and that Isaac had blessed his son when he had eaten and drunk. He added that he rejoiced to share the title of "gluttonous man" with the world's Creator. Then, somewhat inconsistently, he pleaded that his dinners were given with a view to bestowing charity,[4] and ended by quoting

[1] *Epp.* ii. 20. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 21. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 23.

[4] To this plea Gregory replied, with a touch of good-humoured sarcasm: "Convivia, quae ex intentione impendendae caritatis fiunt, recte vestra sanctitas in suis epistolis laudat. Sed tamen sciendum est, quia tunc veraciter ex caritate prodeunt, cum in eis nulla absentium vita mordetur, nullus ex irrisione reprehenditur, et non in eis inanes saecularium negotiorum fabulae, sed verba sacrae lectionis audiuntur, cum non plus, quam necesse est, servitur

the words of St. Paul: *Let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth.* As regards reading, Natalis asserted that the pressure of tribulation prevented him from studying, and cited Matt. x. 19 to prove that this was not, after all, a necessary part of a bishop's duties. He was, however, so he said, giving attention to exhortation, and, though he could not claim to be a great preacher like Gregory, yet he had met with success in bringing heretics back to the Faith. In conclusion, he asserted that he was perfectly aware of the degrees of ecclesiastical rank, and trusted that the Pope, on his side, would respect the privileges of the Church of Salona, which had been handed down and preserved by his predecessors. The letter ended with an expostulation concerning the threat of excommunication.

The author of this singular document could not be taken too seriously. So Gregory sent him a rather sarcastic, yet friendly answer, accepting his excuses, but urging him to greater diligence in the discharge of his episcopal duties. At the same time, he expressed in the clearest terms his opinion of the archbishop's disobedience to the Apostolic See. "After you had received my letters, and those of my predecessor, you despised our decrees and deprived Honoratus of his proper rank. If any of the four Patriarchs had done such a thing, his contumacy could not have been passed over without the gravest scandal. Nevertheless, now that you have learned again to know your place, I no longer remember the wrong you have done to my predecessor and myself."[1]

While acquitting Natalis, Gregory was careful to accord a like favour to Honoratus.[2] However, the old disputes had still to be investigated. The archdeacon came to Rome in person, and the archbishop's proctors were expected daily. While, however, the affair hung thus in abeyance, in March 593 the news arrived that Archbishop Natalis was dead.

It needed not Gregory's penetration to foresee the probability of a hotly contested election. He wrote at once to Antoninus the Sub-deacon, who was manager of the little patrimony in Dalmatia, charging him to see that a fit person

corpori, sed sola eius infirmitas reficitur, ut ad usus exercendae virtutis habeatur. Haec itaque si vos in vestris conviviis agitis, abstinentium fatcor magistri estis."

[1] *Epp.* ii. 50. On this, see also below, Vol. II. p. 224, *sqq.*

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 32.

was canonically elected without bribery or patronage, and that his name was sent to Rome for approval before he was consecrated.[1] Accordingly, by the efforts of Antoninus a section of the electors were persuaded to nominate Honoratus, and to petition Gregory to confirm their choice. The Pope, however, knew that this nomination proceeded only from a section, and was by no means in accordance with the wishes of the majority. He dared not, therefore, give his confirmation until he should have learnt more. He wrote, nevertheless, to express his warm approval of the candidate. "We exhort you to persevere in maintaining the election of Honoratus without any vaccillation. Nothing ought to turn you from him. For as this election is now acknowledged to be praiseworthy, so, if any one unhappily induces you to abandon it, a heavy weight will be laid upon your souls, and the stain of faithlessness upon your reputation."[2]

These forebodings, as the event showed, were justified. There was in Salona and Dalmatia a strong party bitterly hostile to Honoratus. In the first place, there were the friends of Natalis, and all those who had condemned the archdeacon's conduct or had reason to dread his justice or his vengeance. The suffragan bishops, again, were opposed to his elevation; and, what was of great consequence, the officials and chief laymen of the province were all against him. An archbishop, of course, was a personage of too much influence for the Imperial Government to regard his election with indifference. It was of the highest importance for the Proconsul of Dalmatia that the Bishop of Salona should be a man with whom he could live in harmony. The genial Natalis had got on well with the officials, and had enjoyed their support, as is evident from the fact that by his own authority, and without legal trial or synodical decree, he had banished one of his suffragans and confiscated his property.[3] And now that Natalis was dead, the Government was naturally unwilling that any one should be elected whose appointment would certainly be followed, not only

[1] *Epp.* iii. 22: "Facto in persona quae fuerit electa decreto, ad nos transmittere studebis, ut cum nostro consensu, sicut priscis fuit temporibus, ordinetur." Cf. *ibid.* iv. 16: "Ex beati Petri principis apostolorum auctoritate praecipimus, ut nulli penitus extra consensum permissionemque nostram, quantum ad episcopatus ordinationem pertinet, in Salonitana civitate manus praesumatis imponere."

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 46.

[3] *Ibid.* viii. 11.

by a reversal of his predecessor's policy, but also by a rigid investigation of old charges of malpractices, by law-suits, excommunications, complaints and appeals to Rome, and general disturbance and confusion.

So strong was the feeling against Honoratus, that Gregory felt himself obliged to yield, though not without addressing an indignant warning and reproof to the bishops of the province.[1] "As your characters are so perverted by worldly business that, entirely forgetting the nature of your sacerdotal dignity and all considerations of heavenly fear, you endeavour to do, not what will please God, but what pleases yourselves, we have thought it necessary to write you a special and severe letter, in which, by the authority of St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles, we charge you to lay hands on no man for episcopal consecration in the city of Salona without our consent and permission. If, either of your own free will or by compulsion, you presume or attempt to act in any way contrary to these directions, we sentence you to be deprived of the communion of the Lord's Body and Blood, and in consequence of your machinations and your wilful disobedience to our orders, you will be excluded from the Divine Mysteries. Nor will he whom you ordain be recognized as a bishop, for we will have no one inconsiderately ordained whose life is open to censure." However, the Pope promised to agree to the ordination of any fit person who was elected unanimously. One candidate alone was absolutely excluded—a certain Maximus, an ambitious man of loose morals, who was reported to be in high favour with the electors. Him Gregory unconditionally refused to accept. "I have heard much that is bad of him," he wrote. "If he does not give up his attempt to gain this higher rank, he must, I think, after full inquiry, be deprived even of the office which he now holds."

Maximus, however, was not to be lightly suppressed. While the party of Honoratus appealed to the Pope, Maximus and his adherents applied to the Emperor, and a rescript was obtained from Constantinople, commanding his appointment to the vacant see. The officials of the province and the suffragan bishops were heavily bribed; and at the close of 593 or the beginning of 594 the bishop-elect was enthroned by an armed force. Priests, deacons, and other ecclesiastics who ventured to resist were

[1] *Epp.* iv. 16.

injuriously treated, and Antoninus, who had the courage to protest in the name of the Pope, only saved his life by a precipitate flight. Such, at least, were the reports that reached Rome—rumours which had doubtless lost nothing in the process of transmission.

Gregory's indignation was intense. In Maximus he refused to recognize a bishop—"for the consecration was performed by men who were excommunicate"[1]: he was simply "the usurper at Salona."[2] Nevertheless, even in the heat of his anger, Gregory did not forget his habitual caution. He affected to believe that the Emperor had not issued any rescript at all, or that, if he had really done so, he had been misled by false representations. "We are not ignorant of the Emperor's feelings," wrote the Pope to Maximus. "We know that he is not in the habit of meddling with matters which concern the priesthood, lest he should in any way be burdened with our sins." Hence, until definite information on this point was forthcoming, Maximus and those who ordained him were forbidden to discharge any episcopal function or to minister at the altar. "If you presume to disobey these commands, anathema on you from God and from St. Peter the chief of the Apostles."[3]

Maximus, however, strong in the support of the official party, ventured to set at defiance the Pope's authority. He cleverly contrived that Gregory's letter should not be delivered to him personally, and when it was posted up in the city he caused it to be publicly torn in pieces. Moreover, though well aware of his excommunication, he did not hesitate to say mass as usual. Indeed, he even assumed the offensive, and spread abroad a scandalous story about Gregory which practically amounted to a charge of murder. It was affirmed that a certain

[1] *Epp.* iv. 20. The consecration was performed by bishops, who by disobeying the Pope's command, had incurred the penalty of excommunication. Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 9 says, however: "Maximus . . . sacerdotium contra Deum per simoniacam haeresim ab episcopis duntaxat excommunicatis, pretio corruptis, non timuit promereri."

[2] "Praesumptor in Salona."

[3] *Epp.* iv. 20. Compare *ibid.* v. 6: "Postquam serenissimus domnus imperator iussiones transmisit *ut ordinari minime debuisset* . . ." Did the Emperor change his mind and send a second rescript contradicting the first, or was the first really, as Gregory suggested, a forgery? See also Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 9, 10, who suggests that the Emperor was bribed by Maximus.

bishop named Malchus, who had managed the Papal Patrimony in Dalmatia, and had also been a prominent supporter of Maximus, was urgently summoned to Rome, where he was thrown into prison and died suddenly under suspicious circumstances.[1] Of course, no one acquainted with Gregory's character could believe him capable of being a party to assassination.[2] As he himself explained the matter, Malchus was brought to trial for maladministration of the Church property, and condemned; he was taken, after sentence had been pronounced, to the house of the notary Bonifacius, where he was treated with respect, but in the night he died suddenly. There can be no doubt that this explanation accurately represented the facts. Nevertheless, the death of the bishop at this critical juncture was extremely unfortunate, and the coincidence excited no slight alarm and suspicion among the Pope's opponents at Salona.

Meanwhile the embittered relations between Gregory and Maximus were causing some anxiety to the Imperial officials. It is true they still sided with "the usurper." To them he was the lawful Bishop of Salona, elected by the majority of the clergy and people, and consecrated by the bishops of the province with the consent of the Imperial Government. Nevertheless, they clearly saw that a dispute with the Pope could not fail to be productive of great discord and disunion throughout the province, and this they were anxious at any cost to avoid. Efforts were accordingly made to bring about a reconciliation. Distinguished persons wrote to Gregory to intercede for the archbishop. Marcellus, the judicial assessor, and afterwards Proconsul of Dalmatia, one of the chief supporters of Maximus, begged the Pope to pass over his conduct.[3] Julian, the Scribo, sent a testimonial to his popularity "both with the palace and the people."[4] And Maurice himself, while charging Maximus to go to Rome and make his peace, commanded Gregory to overlook the irregularity of his consecration,

[1] *Epp.* v. 6. For Malchus, see *ibid.* i. 36; ii. 22, 45; iii. 22; Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 9.

[2] Gregory says concerning this slander: "De qua re unum est quod breviter suggeras serenissimis domnis nostris, quia si ego servus eorum in morte vel Langobardorum me miscere voluissem, hodie Langobardorum gens nec regem nec duces nec comites haberet, atque in summa confusione esset divisa; sed quia Deum timeo in morte cuiuslibet hominis me miscere formido" (*Epp.* v. 6).

[3] *Ibid.* iv. 38.

[4] *Ibid.* v. 29.

and to receive him with respect as the lawful Metropolitan of Dalmatia.[1]

Gregory was placed in a very difficult position by this mandate of the Emperor, but he acted with adroitness and spirit. He professed himself perfectly willing to forgive, at Maurice's request, any slight or insult which had been put upon himself, but he declared that he had no power to condone any sin which had been committed against God. "In obedience to the injunction of my Most Religious Lord, I have forgiven Maximus his presumption in setting at naught myself and my representative at his ordination. I have forgiven him as completely as though he had been ordained by my authority. But his other transgressions, to wit, the bodily sins of which I have been informed, his election by bribery, his presumption in celebrating mass when excommunicated, I cannot, for God's sake, pass over without inquiry. It is my wish and my prayer to God that he may be found to have committed none of these sins, and that so the matter may be concluded without danger to my soul. But before the investigation has taken place, my Most Serene Sovereign has expressly charged me to receive him, when he comes, with honour. It is indeed a grievous thing that honour should be paid to a man charged with so many great crimes, before his case has been examined and discussed. And if the affairs of bishops committed to my charge are to be settled by patronage at the court of my Most Religious Sovereign, woe is me! Of what use am I in the Church? Yet that my bishops despise me and appeal from me to secular judges, I render thanks to Almighty God, and consider their doing so a punishment for my sins. This, however, I say briefly—I will wait a little longer, and then, if he still delays coming to me, I will not fail to exercise canonical severity against him."[2] Thus Gregory refused, even at the Emperor's command, to surrender any of the rights of the Apostolic See. "I am ready to die," he had written to his responsalis at Constantinople,[3] "rather than allow the Church of the Apostle St. Peter to degenerate in my days. You know my character. I am long-suffering, but when I have once made up my mind to submit no longer, I face every danger with joy."

In September 595 the Pope sent a peremptory order to

[1] *Epp.* v. 39. [2] *Ibid.* v. 39. [3] *Ibid.* v. 6.

Maximus to present himself in Rome, and stand his trial on the counts above mentioned.[1] But "the usurper," whether from timidity or from consciousness of guilt, was determined not to quit Dalmatia. Another rescript, therefore, was obtained from the Emperor, directing that the charges should be investigated at Salona. Here, however, as everybody knew, it was impossible to procure an impartial trial; and so Gregory, in January 596, once again summoned the archbishop to present himself in Rome at the expiration of thirty days, urging him to arrange that no difficulties should be placed in the way of his journey by the civil or military authorities of the province, and giving him a guarantee that the charges should be fairly investigatad in accordance with the canons of the Church, by the help of St. Peter, chief of the Apostles, and under the guidance of God.[2] At the same time, in a separate letter,[3] Gregory assured the clergy and people of Salona that he bore no personal grudge against Maximus, but only desired to act canonically, and he begged them to use their influence to compel the archbishop to come to Rome. He could not refrain, however, from expressing his indignation that only two of the clergy—Honoratus and a bishop Paulinus—had had the strength of mind to abstain from communion with Maximus, though he admitted that he had heard that some had been compelled by force to communicate against their will. "You ought to have had respect to your Orders," he writes, "and to have considered him whom the Apostolic See rejected, as rejected indeed." A similar letter was despatched a few months later to the inhabitants of Jadera, who had communicated with the pretender. "With my whole heart earnestly and entirely I pity you," writes the Pope.[4] "With the love of a father I adjure and exhort you to abstain every one of you from this unlawful communion, and altogether avoid those whom the Apostolic See does not receive, lest the very thing which might bring you salvation should lead to your condemnation in the presence of the Eternal Judge."

Gregory's persistence soon began to take effect. Whatever may have been thought of the fitness of Maximus for the episcopal office, no religious person at Salona could fail to feel the scandal and the peril of the schism in which he was

[1] *Epp.* vi. 3.
[2] *Ibid.* vi. 25.
[3] *Ibid.* vi. 26.
[4] *Ibid.* vi. 46.

involved. Many, no doubt, may have been originally inclined to maintain their right of electing their bishop without interference from Rome. But this liberty Gregory was now perfectly willing to concede. All that he claimed was the right to see that in the election the laws of God and the Church were not disregarded. And the reasonableness of such a claim could not be denied. Hence public feeling began to veer round to the Pope's side. First, in the beginning of 597, Sabinian bishop of Jadera (Zara), braving the intrigues of the archbishop against him both in Dalmatia and at Constantinople, made his submission to Gregory, abstained from communicating with Maximus or mentioning his name at mass, and retired temporally into a monastery to do penance for his fault.[1] A considerable number of bishops seem to have followed his example.[2] Then again, in the same year, the Exarch Romanus, who was ill disposed towards the Pope, died, and was succeeded by Callinicus, who was on friendly terms with the Holy See. But most important of all was the conversion of Marcellus, now become Proconsul of Dalmatia, and his anxiety to be readmitted to the Pope's favour. "We have received the letter of your Greatness," Gregory wrote to him,[3] "in which you say that you have incurred our displeasure, and are therefore anxious to make satisfaction and regain our favour. And, indeed, things are reported of your Greatness which certainly ought never to have been done by a believer. All men say that you are the cause of all the mischief in the affair of Maximus. The spoliation of the Church, the loss of many souls, the audacity of his unheard-of presumption, had their beginning in you. As you seek our favour, therefore, you must make a fitting satisfaction for these sins to our Redeemer, with all earnestness of mind and with tears. For if satisfaction is not made to Him, what can our forgiveness and favour possibly avail? While you are still involved in the ruin of the presumptuous and the defence of the transgressors, we do not see what atonement you can make to God or man. Then, and then only, may your Greatness feel certain that you are making such atonement, when you bring back the wandering to the right way and the proud to the law of humility. If that is done, you may feel sure that you will receive the favour both of God and of man."

[1] *Epp.* vii. 17; viii. 11. [2] Joh. Diac. *Vita* iv. 11. [3] *Epp.* ix. 158.

From this time, while Callinicus kept pressing the Pope to soften the terms of the submission,[1] Marcellus exerted all his influence to induce Maximus to submit.[2] "The usurper's" position, indeed, had become serious, and his friends began to take alarm. Anxious letters from them poured into Rome, testimonials in the archbishop's favour, assurances of his sincere desire for forgiveness, and his dread of the Pope's displeasure. It seems that Maximus was now thoroughly frightened and quite inclined to yield. On one point, however, he stood firm—nothing would induce him to take his trial at Rome. At last a compromise was agreed upon. Maximus was to be tried on the charges of having committed sins disqualifying him for the episcopate, of having procured his election by bribery, and of having celebrated mass when excommunicate. The trial, however, was to be held, not at Rome, but at Ravenna; and it was to be conducted, not by Gregory, but by Archbishop Marinianus, whose sentence the Pope agreed to confirm. Further, if the accused distrusted the Metropolitan of Ravenna as too much under the influence of Rome, Constantius of Milan was to be invited to act as his assessor.[3]

But in the end the trial was never held. Perhaps Marinianus thought better of Maximus than Gregory had done, perhaps he allowed himself to be persuaded by the Exarch. At any rate, on his suggestion, the Pope agreed to a milder course. Maximus was ordered to do penance for having celebrated mass when excommunicate, and to purge himself on oath of the other charges.[4] So in July 599 the Metropolitan of Dalmatia lay for three hours on the bare stones in the streets of Ravenna, crying out, "Peccavi Deo et beatissimo Papae Gregorio!" Then the Exarch Callinicus, Castorius a chartulary of the Roman Church, and Archbishop Marinianus raised him from the ground, and led him to the tomb of the blessed Apollinaris, where he took oath that he was guiltless of the crimes laid to his charge.[5] After this there was handed to him a letter from

[1] *Epp.* ix. 155.
[2] *Ibid.* ix. 237.
[3] *Ibid.* ix. 149, 155.
[4] *Ibid.* ix. 177.
[5] *Epp.* viii. 36; Joh. Diac. iv. 13. Oaths of purgation, taken over the body of a saint, were common at this time. See *Epp.* ii. 30; vii. 18; xiii. 7 (in all which cases the oath was taken "ad sacratissimum corpus beati Petri"). See also Greg. Tur. *Mirac.* i. 20, 53, 58; *De Glor. Conf.* 93. Greg. Tur. *H. F.* v. 50, gives one case of an oath of purgation being taken at three altars: "Restitit ad

Pope Gregory, readmitting him to communion, and bidding him send a messenger to receive the pallium according to custom.[1]

Thus ended the affair of Maximus with the triumph of the Holy See. Gregory had no further trouble with the Church in Dalmatia. The archbishop himself seems to have reformed his ways. But he evidently found that his coveted bishopric was not, after all, a bed of roses. The last of the Salona letters was written by Gregory in July 600, to comfort his old opponent, who had asked for his advice and sympathy in his troubles.[2] "When our common son, the presbyter Veteranus, arrived in Rome, he found me so ill with the gout that I was quite unable myself to reply to your letter. With regard to the Slaves, who threaten to invade your province, I am greatly grieved and disquieted. I am grieved because I suffer when you suffer; and I am disquieted because they have already begun to pass through Istria into Italy. With regard to Julian the Scribo,[3] I know not what to say, since I see on all sides that our sins are so visited upon us, that at the same time we are harassed by the Gentiles without and by the Governors within. Do not, however, grieve too much at this; for those who come after us will see yet worse times, and will think our age happy in comparison with theirs. But so far as you can, my brother, you must resist these men on behalf of the poor and oppressed. Even if you fail in your effort, Almighty God is satisfied with the intention, which He Himself has put into the mind. For it is written: *Rescue them that are drawn unto death, and forbear not to deliver them that are ready to be slain.* And if you say, 'I

hoc causa, ut dictis missis, in tribus altaribus me de his verbis exuerem sacramento."

[1] *Epp.* ix. 176. For another letter accompanying the gift of the pallium, see *ibid.* ix. 234.

[2] *Ibid.* x. 15.

[3] Scribones were officials employed in the administration of military affairs —in raising recruits, distributing largesses to the troops, etc. Theophylact says: ἄνδρα τῶν σωματοφυλάκων τοῦ βασιλέως ὑπερφερόμενον ὃν σκρίβωνα τῇ Λατινίδι φωνῇ Ῥωμαῖοι κατονομάζουσιν (*Hist.* i. 4). Gregory speaks of them (ii. 38; v. 29; ix. 57, 63, 73, 77, 78). Gussanvillaeus notes: "Apud Suidam praefectus protectorum imperatoris, seu comes domesticorum equitum et peditum σκρίβων κατὰ Λατίνους σωματοφυλάκων ὑπερφερόμενος. Apud *Agathiam*, lib. iii. *Hist.* sumitur pro excubitore palatii. Legitur apud Anastasium in Vigilio, in Theodoro." Cf. Du Cange "Scribones."

have not strength enough,' He knows who looks into the heart. In everything you do strive to appease Him who looks into the heart. Fail not to do everything that can win His favour. For human wrath and human favour are as smoke, which a puff of wind bears away and disperses. Feel assured that no one can please both God and evil men. In proportion as you find that you have displeased evil men, in the same proportion you may consider that you have pleased God. At the same time, you should be temperate in your defence of the poor, lest, if you act too rigidly, men should think that you are puffed up with a young man's pride. In protecting the oppressed, we ought rather to act in such a manner that, while the weak feel that they are protected by us, the oppressors, though evilly inclined towards us, may have difficulty in finding anything in our conduct to blame. With respect to the Frontinianists,[1] I trust you will be very careful, and will continue your exertions to recall them to the bosom of the Holy Church. If any of them wish to come to me to be reasoned with, let them first swear that after such reasoning they will not allow their people to continue in their errors. Then your Holiness may promise them that they shall suffer no ill treatment from me, and that I will reason with them. If they recognize the truth, let them receive it; if they do not, I will send them away unharmed. If, however, any of them wish to come to me to complain of you, do nothing to detain them. If they come to me they will either receive satisfaction, or else you may feel sure that they will never see their country again." Evidently Rome was a dangerous place for schismatics and malcontents to visit, unless protected by a safe conduct. Perhaps, after all, Maximus was well-advised when he refused so obstinately to stand his trial there.

(*g*) *The other Churches of Illyricum.*

With the exception of Thrace, all the districts comprehended in the two Illyricums, Eastern and Western, were ecclesiastically

[1] Victor Tunnunensis *Chron.* ad a. 554, 562, speaks of a certain Frontinianus bishop of Salona, exiled on account of his views respecting the Three Chapters. Doubtless his followers are here referred to. The Benedictine editors, however, read "Photinianistis."

subject to the control of the Patriarch of the West.[1] In this wide area there were several metropolitans and two Apostolic Vicars. Of the latter, the oldest and highest in rank was the Bishop of Thessalonica (Saloniki).[2] The second was the Bishop of Prima Justiniana (Scopia or Uskup), who was, perhaps, the most influential of the bishops in Illyricum. He exercised metropolitan jurisdiction over Dacia (Mediterranea and Ripensis), Upper Moesia, Dardania, Praevalitana, and Pannonia; he was ordained "by the venerable council of his own metropolitans"; and in the provinces subject to him he acted as the representative of the Western Patriarch, "according to the constitution of the most holy Pope Vigilius."

In the second year of Gregory's pontificate, one John was elected Archbishop of Prima Justiniana, by the unanimous vote of all the bishops of the province and with the consent of the Emperor. In conformity with precedent, the bishops consecrated him themselves, and requested the Pope to ratify their choice and send the pallium to the new metropolitan. With this petition Gregory was very glad to comply. "According to your desire and request," he wrote, "we confirm by the authority of our assent our aforesaid brother and fellow-bishop in the episcopal rank in which he has been placed, and we show that we consider his consecration valid by sending him the pallium. We have also, according to custom, appointed him our Vicar."[3] At a later time he wrote a sharp reproof to Felix bishop of Sophia, who was disobedient to John, threatening him with canonical punishment if he continued contumacious.

[1] For Illyricum, see Duchesne *L'Illyricum ecclésiastique*, in *Églises separées*.

[2] The Bishop of Thessalonica was the highest in rank of the bishops of Illyricum. He is mentioned first in the inscriptions of *Epp.* viii. 10; ix. 156. Pope Damasus had assigned to him a vicarial jurisdiction over the whole of Eastern Illyricum; but this arrangement was altered by Pope Vigilius. In Gregory's time the bishop of Thessalonica was one Eusebius. To him were sent *Epp.* ix. 196; xi. 55. In the last of these letters Gregory requested the bishop to destroy any copies of Greek sermons, bearing his (Gregory's) name, that he could discover in his diocese, since they were forgeries by an heretical monk named Andrew.

[3] *Epp.* v. 10, 16. These letters have probably been inserted among the letters of the 13th indiction by a mistake of the copyist, since iii. 6 was sent to a Bishop John of P. Justiniana. They probably belong to the year 591–592. It is possible, however, that the John of iii. 6 was succeeded by a bishop of the same name. See Hartmann's note.

"But it will be well," he added, "if you allow your mature reflexion to make you what the canon law will force you to become." [1]

Before long a case was brought on appeal to Rome, in which John was rather discreditably concerned. As this affair throws a curious light on the administration of ecclesiastical law in these dioceses, and on the part sometimes played by the Emperor in ecclesiastical disputes, it will be worth while to give the details.[2]

Thebes was a city in Phthiotis, of which district Larissa in Thessaly was the metropolis. Pope Pelagius the Second, however, had expressly exempted Thebes from the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Larissa. Now, two deacons of Thebes, Cosmas and John (both of whom had been deposed, one for carnal sin and the other for embezzlement), accused Bishop Adrian of Thebes to the Emperor of embezzlement, of a criminal misdemeanour in retaining in office a deacon named Stephen, whose evil life was known to him, and, lastly, of refusing baptism to certain infants, in consequence of which they died in sin. The Emperor directed the Archbishop of Larissa to take cognizance of the matter, ordering him to pass sentence on the charges of embezzlement, and to make a report concerning the others. The archbishop, accordingly, notwithstanding the exemption of Thebes from his jurisdiction, tried Adrian on the pecuniary count and condemned him. Thereupon the condemned bishop appealed to the Emperor, who then made a second order that Gregory's responsalis, Honoratus, and the Chancellor Sebastian, should open an inquiry; and later, having received from them a favourable report, he exempted Adrian from all further proceedings, and sent a notification to that effect to the Metropolitan of Achaia. Meanwhile the Archbishop of Larissa had shut up the unfortunate Adrian in a stifling dungeon, where he kept him a close prisoner until he had extorted from him a confession, frankly acknowledging his guilt in the pecuniary question, and admitting the other charges in ambiguous and uncertain terms. When this document was signed, Adrian was released. But in consequence of the confession, the Emperor issued a third order that the whole affair should be reopened, and that John of Prima Justiniana should conduct the examination. In the trial

[1] *Epp.* v. 8. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 6, 7.

which followed many illegalities were committed, and amongst the rest, Demetrius, a deacon of Thebes, was degraded from his rank and scourged. As the result of the trial, the sentence of the Archbishop of Larissa was confirmed by John, and Adrian was degraded from the episcopate. Then at last the Bishop of Thebes betook himself to Rome, and appealed to the Pope for justice. Gregory sent a summons to his accusers, but as none of them put in an appearance, he was obliged to be content with examining the records of the former trials. The conclusions he reached were that Cosmas and John were untruthful witnesses; that there was no evidence to show that Adrian knew of Stephen's crime; that there was no evidence to prove that Adrian had issued the order about the infants, or that the said infants had died unbaptized; that the confession of Adrian had been extorted by violence, and was not true; that the treatment of Demetrius in the last trial was grossly uncanonical. The Pope, therefore, declared the past proceedings null and void, restored Adrian to his bishopric, and ordered all his property to be returned to him. Moreover, he forbade the Archbishop of Larissa, on pain of excommunication, ever in future to exercise metropolitan jurisdiction over the bishops of Thebes. To John of Prima Justiniana he sent a very stern reproof: "After first cancelling and utterly annulling the sentence you passed, we, by the authority of St. Peter, prince of the Apostles, decree that for the space of thirty days you remain deprived of the Holy Communion, while, with the deepest penitence and tears, you win from Almighty God by your prayers the pardon for so great a crime. If you do not carefully comply with this sentence, you may rest assured that with God's help we shall punish you with all the greater severity, since you will have shown yourself not only unjust, but also contumacious." Adrian eventually was reconciled to his accusers. But the story of his various trials is in many respects instructive. In the first place, we may note that the appeal was first made to the Emperor, who took up the matter without any reference to the Bishop of Rome. It was only in the last resort that recourse was had to the Pope. Secondly, it is observable that, when appealed to, Gregory claimed and exercised, as a matter of course, a supreme jurisdiction over the Churches of Illyricum, and that his authority was apparently not resisted by either the Emperor

or the bishops. Lastly, we remark the extraordinary unfairness and illegality with which ecclesiastical trials were conducted. In the light of such cases as this we cannot wonder that clergy frequently preferred to go before the secular judges rather than the bishops.

Although Gregory had no hesitation in rebuking the Metropolitan of Prima Justiniana when his faults required it, he was nevertheless his very good friend, and on one occasion he even interfered to prevent his being unjustly treated by the Emperor. It was reported that Maurice had determined to depose John on account of his bad health. As soon as the news reached him, Gregory wrote as follows to Anatolius, his responsalis at Constantinople[1]: "Your Affection has informed me that our Most Religious Sovereign is giving orders for the appointment of a successor to our most reverend brother John, bishop of Prima Justiniana, on the ground that the said bishop is suffering from a disease of the head, and it is feared that if his city be left without a bishop's authority it may be destroyed by the enemy—which God forbid! Now, the canons nowhere direct that a bishop should be superseded on account of ill health, and it is thoroughly unjust that a man should be deprived of his rank because he has become ill. It is therefore impossible for me to concur in his deposition, lest I should bring a sin upon my soul by so doing. You must accordingly submit that if the bishop is ill he should not be deposed, but a coadjutor should be appointed to manage his affairs for him, and to fill his place both as ruler of the Church and as guardian of the city. If, however, it should happen that he should himself express a wish to resign his episcopal office on account of ill health, he should be permitted to do so, on sending a written petition to that effect. Otherwise we cannot, for fear of Almighty God, consent to what is proposed. If the bishop will not ask for permission to resign, our Most Religious Sovereign has the power of doing what he likes and carrying out whatever he orders. He may make such arrangements as he thinks fit, only he must not expect us to take part in the deposition of such a man. If what he does is in accordance with the canons, we conform to it; if it is not, we submit to it, as far as we can do so without sin." The last sentences in this letter are not a little

[1] *Epp.* xi. 29. For a similar case, see *Epp.* xiii. 8.

remarkable. They illustrate Gregory's sentiments respecting the right of the Emperor to interfere in ecclesiastical concerns, and the obligation of all his subjects to acquiesce in his decisions. Even the Pope, God-appointed guardian of the canons as he is, has only a right of protest against decrees which appear to be wrong; he is not at liberty to disobey. With this subject I shall deal more fully in a later chapter. Here it is sufficient to call attention to Gregory's view. His protest, in the present case, seems to have been effectual, and John was permitted to retain his see.

In 595 Anastasius, bishop of Corinth and metropolitan of Achaia, was accused of various crimes, and Gregory committed the investigation and judgment of his case to a bishop named Secundinus. Anastasius was condemned and degraded.[1] After his successor was elected and consecrated, the bishops of the province sent one of their number with letters, informing Gregory of the fact, and begging him to send the pallium to their new metropolitan according to custom. Gregory complied with their request. At the same time, he wrote both to them and to the metropolitan, to urge them to make an organized effort to crush out the "simoniacal heresy," which was sapping the vitality of the Churches in their regions.[2]

"I have been informed that in your province no one is admitted to Holy Orders without some payment. If this be the case, I say with tears, I declare with groans, that when the order of the priesthood is corrupted inwardly, it cannot long preserve its position outwardly. We know from the Gospel what our Redeemer Himself did—how He went into the Temple and overthrew the seats of them that sold doves. To sell doves is to receive any temporal advantage from the gift of the Holy Ghost—that Holy Ghost consubstantial with the Father, which God Almighty bestows on men by the laying on of hands. The consequences of this, as I have already said, are clear. The seats of those who sell doves in God's temple will fall by God's judgment. And this sin is propagated and spread yet more widely among your inferiors. For he who pays for his admission to Holy Orders, since the very root of his promotion is cankered, is the more ready to sell to others what he has bought himself. And then what becomes of that which is written: *Freely ye have*

[1] *Epp.* v. 57. [2] *Ibid.* v. 62, 63.

received, freely give? And as simony was the first heresy which arose against the Holy Church, why do not men consider, why do they not understand, that when a bishop receives money for ordaining any one, he, by thus promoting him, causes him to become a heretic? Since, then, this abominable wickedness is condemned by the whole Church, I exhort you to remove at once, by all means in your power, such a detestable, such a fearful sin from all the places under your care. For if we hear of such things happening again, we shall no longer content ourselves with words, but shall inflict canonical punishment, and shall begin to have an opinion of you other than we ought to have."

Simony seems, indeed, to have been very prevalent throughout the whole of Illyricum, and Gregory in the same year took the opportunity to write a denunciation of it, in almost identical terms, to the bishops of Epirus, who had recently consecrated a metropolitan at Nicopolis.[1] Possibly the intercourse and intimate connexion of the bishops of Illyricum with the Imperial court at Constantinople, where every office and dignity was put up to sale, tended to promote the spread of this evil. In the West, as will be shown, simony was flagrant among the Franks, and Gregory was untiring in his endeavours to check the scandal. But neither in the East nor in the West do the Pope's efforts appear to have been very successful.

In 599 Gregory learned that the principal bishops of Illyricum had been summoned to a synod at Constantinople, his own permission not having previously been asked. He wrote, therefore, to warn them that nothing done in the synod would have any force without the authority and consent of the Apostolic See. He feared that the summons was merely preparatory to persuading the bishops to sanction the Patriarch of Constantinople's assumption of the title of "Ecumenical Bishop," and he urgently charged the bishops on no account to agree thereto. "Do not allow, through any cajolery, a synod to be held on this subject: such a synod would not be legitimate, nor could it rightfully be called a synod." Even if it turned out that the assembly was about some other matter, he still begged the bishops to exercise the greatest caution, "lest anything be

[1] *Epp.* vi. 7.

therein decreed against any place or person, prejudicially or unlawfully, or in opposition to the canons." [1]

Finally, in the last year of his pontificate Gregory was concerned in an affair which once again brought him into collision with the Emperor.[2] It seems that, on account of an incursion of the Slaves, the Bishop of Euria in Epirus Vetus, had fled with his clergy and the body of their patron saint Donatus to a place in the island of Corfu called Cassiopi Castrum. Here the bishop wished to bury the body of St. Donatus and to exercise episcopal jurisdiction over the refugees; and he even obtained from Maurice a decree separating the place from the diocese of Corfu, and in effect constituting it a new see for the Bishop of Euria. This decree, however, according to Gregory, was gained by misrepresentation, and was so flagrantly illegal that it was never carried out. Later on, however, the Emperor directed Andrew, bishop of Nicopolis and metropolitan of Epirus, to investigate the case and decide it in accordance with the canons. Andrew then ruled that Cassiopi Castrum should remain under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Corfu, in whose diocese it always was; and his decision was confirmed by Gregory, "with the authority of the Apostolic See." Before, however, the sentence was promulgated, Andrew of Nicopolis died, Maurice was dethroned, and Phocas, the new Emperor, was induced to renew his predecessor's first decree in favour of the Bishop of Euria. Then Gregory wrote to Boniface, his responsalis at Constantinople [3]: "I have thought it right not to publish my decision, lest I should appear to be acting contrary to the commands of my Most Gracious Lord the Emperor, or in contempt of him—which God forbid! I beg your Affection to lay the whole case carefully before his Piety, and to steadily assert that this arrangement is altogether illegal, altogether wrong, altogether unjust, thoroughly

[1] *Epp.* ix. 156: "Quamvis sine apostolicae sedis auctoritate atque consensu nullas, quaeque acta fuerint, vires habeant, verumtamen coram omnipotente Deo obtestor et moneo, ut nullus vestrum illic quibuslibet suasionibus . . . teneatur assensus; sed . . . apostolica auctoritate suffulti praedonem . . . excludite . . . nec de hac re quacunque subreptione synodum patiamini, quale quidem nec synodus dicenda est, celebrari."

[2] *Ibid.* xiv. 7, 8.

[3] *Ibid.* xiv. 8. Here again Gregory's subservient attitude towards the Emperor is remarkable.

at variance with the sacred canons, and that therefore he should not allow such a wrong to be committed in his reign to the prejudice of the Church. Tell him the contents of the judgment delivered by the Bishop of Nicopolis, and inform him that the sentence was confirmed by us. Try to arrange that our decree should be sent to the place together with a decree from him, so that we may be seen both to have shown due regard to his Serenity, and to have fitly corrected what was done with evil presumption. And in this matter you must do your utmost that, if possible, the Emperor himself may issue a decree that our decision is to be maintained. For if this be done, no loophole will be left for further misrepresentation." How far Gregory's compliance would have gone, had the Emperor persisted in maintaining his decree, it is impossible to say. Fortunately, the affair was satisfactorily arranged. Before an answer came from Constantinople, the Bishop of Euria made a written proposal, which the Pope approved. He asked permission to bury the body of St. Donatus in the Basilica of St. John at Cassiopi Castrum, on the understanding that he should be at liberty to remove it again in case he was ever able to return to Euria. On the other hand, he promised to give the Bishop of Corfu a written engagement that he would neither exercise episcopal jurisdiction nor claim any privilege in the place as though he were the regular bishop. With this agreement all parties were satisfied.[1]

It will be seen from the above account that, in his dealings with the Churches of the West, Gregory acted invariably on the assumption that all were subject to the jurisdiction of the Roman See. Of the rights claimed or exercised by his predecessors he would not abate one tittle; on the contrary, he did everything in his power to maintain, strengthen, and extend what he regarded as the just prerogatives of the Papacy. It is true that he respected the privileges of the Western metropolitans, and disapproved of unnecessary interference within the sphere of their jurisdiction canonically exercised. It is also true that in his relations with certain Churches (with that of Africa, for instance) he found it expedient to abstain from any obtrusive assertion of the claims of the Roman See. But of his general principle there can be no doubt whatever.

[1] *Epp.* xiv. 13.

The consistency, the firmness—I may also say the tact and adroitness—with which he upheld the pretensions of his predecessors, his genuine belief in the Apostolic authority of the See of St. Peter, and his outspoken assertion of it, undoubtedly contributed greatly to build up the system of Papal absolutism.[1] "It would be most unjust to compare him to a Gregory VII or Innocent III, to Martin V or to Pius IX; yet the line which he took was preparing the way for such successors, and formed an element in the process by which an indefinite precedency and a limited patriarchate were, in effect, to be superseded by a claim to dominion at once oecumenic in its scope and autocratic in its character."

[1] See more on this subject below, Vol. II. p. 224, *sqq.*

END OF VOL. I.

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